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ERS

OF

ANNA SEWARD

WRITTEN BETWEEN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1807.

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IN SIX VOLUMES.

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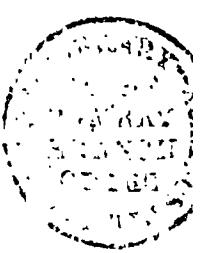
VOLUME VI.



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LETTERS

OF

ANNA SEWARD.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

MR SIMMONS, Surgeon in Manchester.

Lichfield, Jan. 20, 1802.

DEAR Sir,—I am ashamed of not having sooner acknowledged your obliging attention in sending me a paper from the American press, which states a circumstance so remarkable. I do not, however, exactly perceive what poetic use could be made of it, or of the coincidence of the fall of that tree with the tidings of the traitor's death, whose treachery to his country brought the amiable and gallant Major André into that dire snare, which drew upon his head the doom of a disgraceful and unsoldierlike death. In the first paroxysm of anguish for the fate of my beloved friend, I wrote that Monody under the belief that he was basely murdered rather than reluctantly sacrificed to the belligerent customs and laws. I have since understood the subject better. Ge-

neral Washington allowed his aide-de-camp to return to England after peace was established, and American independence acknowledged; and he commissioned him to see me, and request my attention to the papers he sent for my perusal; copies of his letters to André, and André's answers, in his own hand, were amongst them. Concern, esteem, and pity, were avowed in those of the General, and warm entreaties that he would urge General Clinton to resign Arnold in exchange for himself, as the only means to avert that sacrifice which the laws of war demanded. Mr André's letters breathed a spirit of gratitude to General Washington for the interest he took in his preservation, but firmly declined the application to General Clinton. The other papers were minutes of the court martial, from which it appeared, that General Washington had laboured to avert the sentence against André, and to soften the circumstances of disguised dress, and of those fatal drawings of the enemies' outworks and situation, which placed him in the character of a spy rather than that of a negotiator. The General's next fruitless endeavour was to have obtained the grant of poor André's petition, to die a less disgraceful death. His voice, though commander of the American armies, counted but as one on the court-martial. General Washington did me

the honour to charge his aide-de-camp to assure me, that no circumstance of his life had given him so much pain as the necessary sacrifice of André's life, and that next to that deplored event, the censure passed upon himself in a poem which he admired, and for which he loved the author; also to express his hope, that, whenever I reprinted the Monody, a note might be added, which should tend to acquit him of that imputed inexorable and cruel severity which had doomed to ignominious death a gallant and amiable prisoner of war.

With that just request I immediately complied, by a paper sewed to the copy of my poem, from which I mean the future edition should be printed, if I should live to collect my works and publish them in a miscellany. So many years has the design been deferred, through a dread of the fatigue and solicitude that must attend its execution, as to induce me to believe I shall never have resolution for the task.

From the hour I conversed with General Washington's officer, and perused these papers, I have regretted the injustice of which I had been guilty, without any consciousness that I was injurious.

Were I to take the fall of the tree, or, I should rather say, its destruction, for the subject of another ode, how must I speak of the fall of

André, convinced, as I now am, that it was the inevitable consequence of those rash hazards to which he put his safety in the zeal of being useful to the English cause? Must I consider that tree as supernaturally destroyed in token of the anger of Heaven against those who doomed the ever-dear victim who was first seized beneath its boughs? That would be to persist in sentiments which I have long known were erroneous, and unjust to the character of one of the wisest and best of men; the father and preserver of his country; her rescuer from oppression, the source of her independence, and rising prosperity.

On the 1st of last December Mr Saville had a dangerous seizure, which he believes was of a paralytic nature. I hope he is mistaken; but the small portion of strength which he previously enjoyed, has not yet returned, nor has he been able to venture out of doors, except one day, since. He and Mrs Smith desire to join me in compliments, and best wishes to yourself and Mrs Simmons. When I began this letter I had no thought of intruding upon your attention so long.

I remain, dear Sir, your obliged friend.

LETTER II.

Mrs M. Powys.

Lichfield, Feb. 5, 1802.

My heart has often responded to the interesting contents of the letter before me, and vexatious to me proved the perpetual occurrence of restraining circumstances, that wasted, in fruitless purpose, the duty of an earlier acknowledgment.

Some part of the intervening time I had neither wish nor power to write, even to the dearest of my absent friends. That you are that dearest I can, without flattery, avow. Your kind bosom is a mirror which reflects my happiest years, and on your memory their sweetest delights are written. Friends of later date may be admired, esteemed, beloved, but, unconscious of Honora, cannot be dear to me as yourself.

I have excited your attention, the friendly wish to learn what was that circumstance which wrapt my spirits in so drear a stagnation; but you guess it, and you guess truly, that it was fears for his life, who, as well as yourself, is blessedly spared to me

from the wrecks of time, of change, of mortality; and who is not, as you, alas! are, divided from me widely, but with whom I can every day talk of past days, and of all whose for ever lost society contributed to make them happy; and who now, though slumbering in the dark and narrow house, render pleasant the tales of other times, by the power of those indelible images of their persons, their talents, and their kindness, which they have left in our hearts.

You know that Mr Saville's health has been long precarious. On the first of December I received an alarming summons to his house at day-dawn. In the severe cold of the preceding day he had, against earnest remonstrance, been twice at church, where he read the first lessons, and joined in the services and anthems. At six in the morning he found himself suddenly, and as he believed, fatally seized. He seemed to have lost the use of his limbs; could not bear the light, nor lift up his eyelids. I found him in his daughter's arms, perfectly sensible, but shivering and trembling violently, and avowing his belief that his dissolution was near. Mrs Smith had sent for our skilful and humane physician, Dr Jones. He did not arrive till nine, and before his arrival our poor friend grew better; his trem-

blings abated, and he could open his eyes. The Doctor comforted us that the present danger was subsiding.

At that juncture Mr Saville was preparing to quit the little habitation which had sheltered him twenty-eight years. The old woman who slept in his house and waited upon him, was become nearly superannuated, and incapable of giving proper attendance in severe sickness. There was no third apartment in which his daughter, Mrs Smith, could sleep. The neat little dwelling, which I had been fortunate enough to purchase for him, two doors below where he then lived, was unaired, and wholly unfit for his reception. Dr Jones seconded my proposal, that he should be brought here in a sedan, where his daughter could be constantly with him, and sleep in a tent-bed in his apartment, and where he could have every necessary comfort and attendance.

Thank God, he continued to amend surprisingly, considering the violence of the seizure; but remained so weak and lethargic during some days, as to leave a sense of sad dismay upon my heart. The long and bitter frost perhaps retarded his partial recovery; partial, for he had many drawbacks, and has not yet, by any means, recovered that little portion of renovated strength which he gained on his summer excursion to the coast, and

into Wales, and which remained with him till this perilous attack. He could not be removed with safety during the winter's rigour. Meantime Mrs Smith exerted herself in preparing his new and lightsome habitation, and made it very neat and comfortable; removed all his books, and little furniture, and last Monday Mrs Smith, Mr and Mrs Thomas White, and myself, went with him to take possession, and drank tea and supt in his pleasant parlour. He has a good bed-chamber, a neat second room, for Mrs Smith, if he should again want her nocturnal nearness to his person, and a third for his new servant. I know he will have your fervent wishes for his recovery, and, in that trust, he presents to you his most affectionate respects.

I do not recollect that you ever mentioned Mrs Scowen to me. Very interesting is her portrait in your last letter. It is sad that the peace of so pure and liberal a mind should have been an almost incessant mark for the arrows of misfortune. I long to know more of her history. Closely connected with you these past thirty years, and I unconscious that you possessed a beloved friend of that name! It is then probable that she knew Honora;—the day-star of your youth, and of mine. Ah! how often do I exclaim, " Be thou on a moon-beam, Honora,

near the window of my rest, when my soul is at peace, and the hours of anxiety are past."

I wish Mrs Scowen would accompany you on your promised visit to me this spring. O! how long it is since we met! Your next letter will, I trust, fix the period for restoring you to my corporal sense, whose image has, from early youth, lived in my mind, with many many a regret for the distance which divides our persons. If our poor friend continues tolerably well; if I have not to mourn the loss of his existence, or its comfortless debility, how glad shall I be to see you both together, whom, in days long fled, I have so often seen with a third, that, in this world, I must see no more, except with the faithful eye of consecrating remembrance.

That Miss G. Hardy's constitution, rescued from terrible suffering and danger, by the skill of Dr Mosely, retained its state of progressive health, when you last wrote to me, I rejoice. I hope this winter's rigour has not thrown back the amiable creature into her long oppressive malady.

How lamentably disease prevails amongst those sisters, and how dreadfully pitiable was their late maternal loss? Their beloved brother's return will illuminate, for a while, the darkness of regret, and impart as much of joy as cruel disease will permit to arise. I am glad that kind brother is

not amongst the countless victims of the late fruitless and remorseless war.

General Grinfield and his amiable lady left us before your last arrival. It was one universal regret that she was only lent, not given to our little city; but we were consoled that she melted away from us in the blessed sunshine of returning peace.

Well and wisely do you speak on its subject, concerning those redeeming contingencies which the never-ending flight of days and years may bring to rescue this country from the dangerous situation in which the presumptuous folly, the rashness and cruelty of her late rulers, have placed her; who, in defiance of the solemn warnings, and self-evident truths, which their wiser opponents uttered, from time to time, in the senate, persisted in purchasing, with her gold and her blood, the supremacy of her foe.

LETTER III.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 29, 1802.

ACCEPT my warmest thanks for the so far overpaying bounty of your literary present*. In speaking of its contents, I shall demonstrate that my sincerity may be trusted, whatever cause I may give you to distrust my judgment. In saying that you dare not hope your works will entertain me, you evince the existence of a deep preconceived distrust of the latter faculty in my mind. That distrust is not, I flatter myself, entirely founded, at least if I may so gather from the delight with which I peruse all that is yours, whether prose or verse, in these volumes.

Your dissertations place us in Scotland, in the midst of the feudal period. They throw the strongest light on a part of history indistinctly sketched, and partially mentioned by the English historians, and which, till now, has not been suf-

* Minstrelsy of the Scotish Border, consisting of historical and romantic ballads, collected by Walter Scott, Esq.—*S.*

ficiently elucidated, and rescued by those of your country, from the imputed guilt of unprovoked depredation on the part of the Scots.

The old border ballads of your first volume, are so far interesting, as they corroborate your historic essays; so far valuable, as that they form the basis of them. Poetically considered, little surely is their worth; and I must think it more to the credit of Mrs Brown's memory, than of her taste, that she could take pains to commit to remembrance, and to retain there, such a quantity of uncouth rhymes, almost totally destitute of all which gives metre a right to the name of poetry.

Poetry is like personal beauty; the homeliest and roughest language cannot conceal the first, any more than can coarse and mean apparel the second. But grovelling colloquial phrase, in numbers inharmonious; verse that gives no picture to the reader's eye, no light to his understanding, no magnet to his affections, is, as composition, no more deserving his praise, than coarse forms and features in a beggar's raiment, are worth his attention. Yet are there critics who seem to mistake the squalid dress of language for poetic excellence, provided the verse and its mean garb be ancient.

Of that number seems Mr Pinkerton, in some

of his notes to those old Scotish ballads which he published in 1781; and the late Mr Headly, more than so seems in that collection of ancient English ballads, which he soon after gave to the press. We find there an idiot-preference of the rude, and, in itself, valueless foundation, on which Prior raised one of the loveliest poetic edifices in our language, the Henry and Emma. With equal insolence and stupidity, Mr Headly terms it "Matt's versification Piece," extolling the imputed superiority of the worthless model. It is preferring a barber's block to the head of Antinous.

Mr Pinkerton, in his note to the eldest Flowers of the Forest, calls it, very justly, an exquisite poetic dirge; but, unfortunately for his decisions in praise of ancient above modern Scotish verse, he adds,—"The inimitable beauty of the original, induced a variety of versifiers to mingle stanzas of their own composition; but it is the painful, though necessary duty of an editor, by the touchstone of truth, to discriminate such dross from the gold of antiquity;" and, in the note to that pathetic and truly beautiful elegy, Lady Bothwell's Lament, he says the four stanzas he has given appear to be all that are genuine. It has since, as you observe, been proved, that both the Flodden Dirges, even as he has given them, are modern. Their beauty

was a touchstone, as he expresses it, which might have shewn their younger birth to any critic, whose taste had not received the broad impression of that torpedo, antiquarianism.

You, with all your strength, originality, and richness of imagination, had a slight touch of that torpedo when you observed that the manner of the ancient minstrels is so happily imitated in the first Flowers of the Forest, that it required the strongest positive evidence to convince you that the song was of modern date. The phraseology, indeed, is of their texture, but, comparing it with the border ballads in your first volume, I should have pronounced it modern, from its so much more touching regrets, so much more lively pictures.

Permit me too to confess, that I can discover very little of all which constitutes poetry in the first old tale, which you call beautiful, excepting the second stanza, which gives the unicorns at the gate, and the portraits, "with holly aboon their brie." To give them, no great reach of fancy was requisite; but still they are picture, and as such, poetry.

Lord Maxwell's Good Night is but a sort of inventory in rhyme of his property, interspersed with some portion of tenderness for his wife, and some expressions of regard for his friends; but

the first has no picture, and the latter little pathos. That ballad induced me, by what appeared its deficiencies, to attempt a somewhat more poetic leave-taking of house, land, and live-stock. My ballad does not attempt the pathetic, and you will smile at my glossary Scotch.

Mr Erskine's supplemental stanzas to the poem, asserted to have been written by Collins on the Highland superstitions, have great merit, and no inferiority to those whose manner they assume.

In the border-ballads, the first strong rays from the Delphic orb illuminate Jellom Grame in the 4th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 20th stanzas. There is a good corpse-picture in Clerk Saunders, the rude original, as you observe, of a ballad in Percy, which I have thought furnished Burger with the hint for his Leonore. How little delicate touches have improved this verse in Percy's imitation!

> "O! if I come within thy bower
> I am no mortal man!
> And if I kiss thy rosy lip
> Thy days will not be long*."

And now, in these border ballads, the dawn

*This stanza has no rhymes, but we do not miss them, so harmonious is the metre.—*S.*

of poesy, which broke over Jellom Grame, strengthens on its progress. Lord Thomas and fair Annie has more beauty than Percy's ballad of that title. It seems injudiciously altered from this in your collection; but the Binnorie, of endless repetition, has nothing truly pathetic; and the ludicrous use made of the drowned sister's body, by the harper making a harp of it, to which he sung her dirge in her father's hall, is contemptible.

Your dissertation preceding Tam Lane, in the second volume, is a little mine of mythologic information and ingenious conjecture, however melancholy the proofs it gives of dark and cruel superstition. Always partial to the fairies, I am charmed to learn that Shakespeare civilized the elfins, and, so doing, endeared their memory on English ground. It is curious to find the Grecian Orpheus metamorphosed into a king of Winchelsea.

The Terrible Graces look through a couple of stanzas in the first part of Thomas the Rhymer "O they rade on," &c. also "It was mirk, mirk night;" and potent are the poetic charms of the second part of this oracular ballad, which you confess to have been modernized; yet more potent in the third. Both of them exhibit tende touches of sentiment, vivid pictures, landscapes

from nature, not from books, and all of them worthy the author of Glenfinlas.

"O tell me how to woo thee" is a pretty ballad of those times, in which it was the fashion for lovers to worship their mistresses, and when ballads, as you beautifully observe, reflected the setting rays of chivalry. Mr Leyden's Cout Keelder pleases me much. The first is a sublime stanza, and sweet are the landscape-touches in the 3d, 10th, and 11th, and striking the winter-simile in the 9th. The picture of the fern is new in poetry, and to the *eye*, thus,

> "The next blast that young Keelder blew,
> The wind grew deadly still;
> Yet the sleek fern, with fingery leaves,
> Wav'd wildly o'er the hill."

The "wee Demon" is admirably imagined.

And now the poetic day, which had gradually risen into beauty and strength through this second volume, sets nobly amidst the sombre, yet often-illuminated grandeur of Glenfinlas.

Permit me to add one observation to this already long epistle. The battle of Flodden-field, so disastrous to Scotland, has been, by two poetic females, beautifully mourned; but your boasted James the Fourth deserved his fate,

from the ungenerous advantage he sought to take of Henry the Eighth, by breaking the peace, without provocation, when that monarch was engaged in a war with France. So deserve all the rulers of nations, who, unstimulated by recent injuries, thus unclasp "the purple testament of bleeding war."

Perhaps this voluminous intrusion on your time will be thought merciless; but it seemed to me that barren thanks, and indiscriminate praise, was an unworthy acknowledgment of the honour conferred upon me by the gift of these highly curious, and ingenious books.

A bright luminary in this neighbourhood recently shot from its sphere, with awful and deplored suddenness. Dr Darwin, on whose philosophical talents and dissertations, so ingeniously conjectural, the adepts in that science looked with admiring, if not always acquiescent respect; in whose creative, gay, luxuriant, and polished imagination, and harmonious numbers, the votaries of poetry basked delighted; and on whose discernment into the cause of diseases, and skill in curing them, his own, and the neighbouring counties reposed. He was born to confute, by his example, a frequent assertion, that the poetic fancy loses its fine efflorescence after middle life.

The Botanic Garden, one of the most highly-imaginative poems in our language, was begun after its author had passed his forty-sixth year.

I have the honour to remain, Sir, &c.

LETTER IV.

Rev. T. S. Whalley.

Lichfield, May 15, 1802.

Four months have passed away since I addressed you, my dear, deprived, afflicted friend. It is my hope that they have not passed without having distilled upon your heart some portion of that balm with which time assists reason and religion in their power of mitigating fruitless woe*. Conscious that repose of mind was not only desirable to you, but good for you, I have forborne thus long to inquire after your state of mind and health. Sir Walter and Lady Jane James have probably detained you in London, as the scene in

* For the death of his excellent wife, upon which the author had condoled with him in a letter, which does not appear.—*S.*

which your attention might most successfully be turned towards extrinsic circumstances and objects.

You inquire after my health. It was not good through the rigid and gloomy winter, and has not improved beneath the blooming renovation of the vegetable world. Rheumatism combines with the added weakness entailed upon me by the yet unrecovered accident of spring-twelvemonth, and dizziness of head, tremulous motion of heart, and difficulty of breathing when I walk, are daily returning sensations of a more threatening nature.

My spirits have never permanently recovered the shock of my valued friend Mr Saville's dangerous seizure in December, and he is so frequently ill, and so imperfectly recovers that portion of his long feeble strength which his last seizure took away, that apprehension for his life sits heavy on my heart; yet, unless prevented by farther increase of disease, we have each promised to visit our friend, Mr Mitchel, in Worcestershire, that I may not quit existence without having heard the nightingale: but this gratification has been so often averted, that I begin to think its notes are sounds which destiny interdicts to my ear. Next Monday is fixed for our setting

I am afraid my rheumatic pains will impel my reluctant course to Buxton again this summer.

These last three weeks the society of dear Mrs M. Powys, one of the few existing friends of my youth, often beguiled my attention of its anticipating fears, while we recalled the image of our lost Honora, scarcely less dear to Mrs Powys than to myself. Thus was that charming creature ideally restored to these apartments, and bowers, the scenes of her youth and happiness, and which breathe of her still. Mrs Powys left me this morning, and a letter to you was in unison with my feelings. I am but too likely to behold her no more, since our habitations are so distant. It is eight years since we met.

You have doubtless seen in the papers, the late sudden death of the celebrated Dr Darwin. His extinction is universally lamented, from the most operative cause of regret; and while disease may no longer turn the eye of hope upon his rescuing and restoring skill, the poetic fanes lose a splendid source of ornament; philosophic science, an ingenious and daring dictator; and medicinal art, a pillar of transcendent strength.

His son, Dr Darwin of Shrewsbury, has applied to me for assistance in furnishing materials

for a short life of this great man, which may hereafter be requested as a prelude to future editions of his works. Dr Darwin of Shrewsbury justly observes, that his father's utter dislike to all personal questions, left him entirely in the dark respecting the earlier part of his life, the twenty-four years in which he practised physic in Lichfield, and which passed beneath the unobservant eyes of his own sportive infancy and boyism. He is conscious that they must form a part of Dr Darwin's existence better known to me, who lived in habitual intimacy with him from my thirteenth year, the period in which his constellation of talents first beamed upon our city, and which illumined it so long.

I had rather this application had not been made, since my respect for the existing Dr Darwin will not let me say it nay; since the demands upon my pen are already too heavy for my health, and since that impartial display of both sides the medal, which constitutes valuable biography, may not be given by the filial hand, or presented by another to the filial eye. Dr Darwin, late of Derby, was a mixed character, illustrious by talent, professionally generous, always hospitable, kind, and charitable to the poor, sometimes friendly, but never amiable. While on abstract-

mes his imagination glowed; while on entrance, and on a commencing conversation, his countenance wore a benevolent smile, we invariably found, on its progress, a cold satiric atmosphere around him, repulsing all attempts to interchange the softer sympathies of friendship. Age did not improve his heart, and, on its inherent coldness, poetic authorism, commencing with him after middle-life, engrafted all its irritability, disingenuous arts, and grudging jealousy of others' reputation. As a poet, his genius was luxuriant, yet vigorous, but his taste was fastidious respecting polish, and meritricious in the desire of ornament. As affection was the desideratum of his temperament, so is simplicity that of his verse, so was irreligion that of his judgment. The warm defender of public liberty, he exerted despotism, by resistless sarcasm towards those in mature life, over whom he had natural or acquired powers.

Biography has very seldom characteristic truth, because it is generally manufactured by near relations, or by obliged and partial friends, or by editors, who consider it highly conducive to their own profits on the work, that the author whose writings they publish or republish, should, as a private character, possess the unqualified esteem and admiration of their readers; and they do for

him what Queen Elizabeth requested her painters to do for her, they draw a picture without shades.

LETTER V.

Rev. J. H. Todd of London.

Lichfield, June 11, 1802.

The difficulties which have met you on the Drydenic range* may well be conceived, nor do I wonder that they have slackened the nerves of your industry. Certainly the genius of that unprincipled man, and most unequal poet, was vigorous and fertile.—"An early, rich, and inexhausted vein." Yet it is surely the fashion to hold him much too high; and from your own word, *inimitable*, as applied to even his best writings,

* Mr Todd had, at this time, begun to prepare a biographic and critical edition of Dryden, but postponed it to prepare such an edition of Spencer; influenced, as he hinted, by the report of several men of letters being then employed upon Dryden, happily applying an exclamation of Richard III.

"I think there be six Richmonds in the field."

—*S.*

somewhat recoil. Detached passages of Dryden's may perhaps equal almost any poetry extant; but when we reflect that he has been excelled in every separate order of verse, justice may scruple the imputed transcendence. In epic translation, and regular satire, by Pope; in elegy by Gray, and by Mason; in witty and humorous composition by Prior; and in the dramatic line, O how immeasurably transcended by Shakespeare?

Shall you be able, in your present undertaking, to account to us for the strange irrelevant title Spencer gave to his principal poem? Who would not expect from that title much poetic sport with the Gothic mythology, demonized by the elder bards of Caledonia, sylphized by Shakespeare, and the British poets; who, as Mr Scott, in his late volumes of ancient Scotch poetry, entitled The Minstrelsy of the Border, observes, first civilized, polished, and rendered benevolent the fairy tribe. But the little gentlefolk have no place in Spencer, except on his title-page.

You, who are so deeply impressed by the manly energies of Milton's sonnets, will not, I think, claim the meed of excellence for Spencer's, so full of poetic foppery, and unimpassioned love, labouring and toiling beneath amorous pretences.

If Cowley loses, as he is said to have lost, the true poetic spirit in the mazes of metaphysic wit, what can be claimed, as fine poetry, for the sonnets of Spencer? However, in his Fairy-Queen you will find ample room for that discriminating eulogy which is so much your talent, the result of sensibility, benevolence, learning, and taste.

I inclose a letter from my friend, Mr Christopher Smyth, Barrister of Lincoln's Inn; since it respects yourself,—offering to procure you access to ancient books, which may be useful to your present undertaking. He desires, and he deserves, the honour of Mr Todd's acquaintance, for he is ingenious, lettered, energetic, and amiable.

From what you say of the paragraph in the Critical Review of your Milton, and which mentions Mr White and myself, I conclude it mentions us with contumely. That Review has been long unfavourable to my compositions. I have been lately informed, with certainty, that Southey is its editor. It is seldom that a man of so much genius sacrifices his time to a nameless periodical species of authorism. Probably he has not forgiven my published philippic on the unpatriotic spirit of his Joan of Arc, ardent as was

its testimony to the poetic excellence of that work.

I see no reviews, except by accident, sick, as I have long been, of their partiality to much worse, and their prejudices against much better verses than mine. I have not, and I shall not make an experiment upon my stoicism, by exploring the malice in the Critical Review to which you allude; though I think I could stand it unwounded, beneath the reflection that I have seen that tract lavishing encomium on the most unintelligible fustian that ever bore the name of an epic poem. It called itself Gebir. Southey told a friend of mine lately, that it was the finest poetic work which had appeared these fifty years. So Johnson stilted up Blackmore.

I remain, Sir, &c.

LETTER VI.

THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Lichfield, June 14, 1802.

VERY very sweet is praise from those whose talents we respect, and in whose sincerity we have confidence. I am delighted that my address, in the Monthly Mirror for March last, to a nameless River, stands so very high in your good graces;—*nameless*, because amiable Mr Bree's fine pencil never copies from other masters, or even from nature herself, delineating solely from his own creative imagination.

Mr Saville is much gratified and obliged by the distinctness of your recollection concerning the transient, but to him very interesting conversations which he had the honour to obtain from your goodness. You have read him rightly; he is full of ingenuous integrity, and awakened intelligence, which time has nothing chilled. My almost next door neighbour since my twelfth and his twentieth year,—from that far, far distant period, my esteem and friendship for him have never known abatement.

We passed the two last weeks of the last month together in Warwickshire, at the house of our mutual and excellent friend Mr Mitchel; the abode of hospitality, the bowers of pleasantness. My journey thither had a double motive, the society of our friend Mr Mitchel and his amiable niece, and her friend, the sprightly and pleasing Mrs Ironmonger; and the desire of not quitting existence unconscious of the song of Philomel. Lichfield and its environs are too far north for her visitation, and it had never been my lot to find myself in her haunts, when she and her feathered sisters

> ——————" beat the ear of night
> With their contentious throats."

Mr Wordsworth having, in his Lyrical ballads, so boldly given Virgil, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, and Akenside, the lie, as to the melancholy sweetness of her song, yet farther stimulated my curiosity*.

The nearest haunt of those syrens is a mile and a half from Mr Mitchel's house. During five successive nights after our arrival, cold, blustering, sunless winds forbade all hope of this music.

I grew impatient, and began to think it the in-

* In an interesting letter from Mr Fox, quoted in the preface to his History, this opinion concerning the cheerfulness of the nightingale's note is pleasingly supported.

terdiction of my destiny. A glowing and balmy evening at length arrived. Mr Mitchel took me in his chair, Mr Saville rode, and the rest of the party, three ladies and a gentleman, walked to the edge of a wild and lonely coppice, through which a clear brook meandered.

We found the concert loud and various. Blackbirds, throstles, ring-doves, linnets, larks, &c. &c. united with the, till then, unheard queen of the woods. So fully accompanied, I could judge but imperfectly of her single powers. We staid, however, by the copse till her rivals, of other plume, had slunk to their nests, her "amorous descant" continuing, and answered by a second nightingale.

I confess I do not think the notes pensive in the degree which her eulogists, of mighty name, had taught me to expect; not so pensive as the woodlark's, and not sweeter, though much more various. Thrice did we visit this harmonious coppice, and always found the melody we sought. If I do not say with Milton, "most melancholy," at least I abjure Mr Wordsworth's heterodox epithet, *merry*, for the strains of the nightingale.

That Bloomfield's tales are so popular, I am, for his interest's sake, glad; but that popularity affords me fresh proof how little its immediate result can be depended upon as a criterion of ge-

nuine, and high poetic merit. It is with poetry as with music. The sublime harmonies and the melodies of coyly elegant simplicity, please few in comparison with the numbers who are delighted with the Blue Bells of Scotland, and all such sort of airs.

The popularity of the Farmer's Boy will last, because it merits popularity. Its author's tales, lately published, will either soon be forgotten, or valued only as proceding from that pen which has presented to the poetic fanes a work of intrinsic beauty. Bloomfield has much genius, but he wants ear and taste. The first of these deficiencies is apparent, even in that lovely production the Farmer's boy; since, though it contains a number of scattered lines, which are sufficiently harmonious, there is, in general, a certain hitch in the verse. It may perhaps be reasonably observed, that where we find so much for the eye, the understanding, and the heart, the ear may be contented to want the luxury of the Popean numbers. He wants a judicious critic at his elbow. An wholesale panegyrist he certainly possesses, to whose indiscrimination his pecuniary interests are perhaps as much indebted, as, by its unclassical partiality, the refinement of his ear, and his progress in accuracy and just taste, are retarded.

These tales are not without some strokes of nature, some faint gleams of original genius; but in them, tuneless, hard, and jerking metre is continual. Would any critic of but common judgment suffer so gross a violation of truth, nature, and probability, to pass the press, as that stanza in The Market Night, where a farmer's wife, whose mind is in agony for the safety of her husband, in a deep snow, the hour of his expected arrival some time passed by, hears the gate clap, and calls on Echo, forsooth, to repeat the sound, thus:

> " Distressing hour! uncertain fate!
> O Mercy guide him safely home!
> Hark—then I heard the distant gate,
> Repeat it, Echo! quickly! come!

That apostrophe to echo would have been unnatural, even in a refined and classical personage, at an instant in which the soul was in tumults. To desire to hear the gate clap again, as swing-gates often do, might be in nature, but not to address and personify a fabled being for that repetition.

Adieu, for the dark hour steals fast upon my pen.

LETTER VII.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, July 10, 1802.

NEVER have I been more gratified than by the honour which my little presumptuous ballad* acquires. No expectation so proud had been formed, as that you would desire to insert it in your third volume of Scotch Minstrelsy. I am delighted with the ingenious term for my attempt, "theoretical Scotch."

Allan Ramsay's poetry caught my youthful attention, and, by glossary assistance, I resolved to understand it. From that time the ancient Scotch dialect appeared to me to possess, in the hands of a true poet, what I think it is you who have so well defined, "a certain Doric delicacy." To my ear it is not less pleasing than the English of Spenser, and far more agreeable than the phraseology of Chaucer, and his contemporaries.

* Rich auld Willie's Farewell, published in the late edition of the author's poems by Mr Scott, and formerly in the third volume of the Minstrelsy of the Border.

I hope it will not be lost amongst you; that your men of genius, yet unborn, will have the patriotism to preserve it by frequently making it the vehicle of their inspirations.

During some years I had not looked into compositions in that dress, when your peasant miracle, your Burns appeared. He reanimated my endeavour to recal the faded traces of former industry; and now I have seldom occasion to consult the glossary when I read ancient Scotch poetry.

It is curious to observe, that without any want of accuracy or even elegance in writing our language, how inferior, both in originality and spirit, are all Burns's verses, which are purely English, to those he has given us in his native dialect.

South of the Tweed he has few warmer admirers than myself; and yet I say to you, what I have often said to others, that I would rather have written The Eve of St John, and Glenfinlas, than any thing of his, even the Tam o' Shanter, which I consider as his *chef d'œuvre*. With what singular happiness the two extremes of style, the ludicrous and the sublime, are blended in that poem, and with what sweet effect little droppings of morality are scattered over it; how true to nature the rustic man-

ners, how lovely the similies, how vivid the pictures! Critical stupidity, though he does not seem aware of it, is recorded by Dr Currie, respecting the jocose moral which concludes that tale, and which is so admirably in keeping with the general style. One pities the taste of those who adjured Burns to make a graver conclusion. He did well to laugh at his advisers, and retain his sportive exhortation.

I feel all the force of your apology for estimating the poetry of the Border Minstrelsy higher than I think it merits. If the local partialities have biassed the criticisms of Scotland, they have given exquisite interest and beauty to her metrical compositions, since they ceased to be merely metrical. Tender local devotion excites sympathy far beyond the bounds of the scenery it consecrates. We think of our own favourite haunts when we read of Cowdenknows and Invermay, of the Haughs of Leader, and of the Braes of Yarrow. It is to the disadvantage of English verse, that in general it has less of local sentiment than that of the Scotch.

Perfectly am I aware of the magical power of associated ideas, of whose relative connection we are sometimes anxious, but oftener, as you admirably observe, are unable to trace, or define it.

Those pleasurable sensations are especially linked to verses, and to musical airs, and most forcibly when verse and music have, in union, seized upon our attention during seasons of happiness. Many a silly song, with which my ear had been familiar in my childhood and rising youth, does at this hour, on recurrence, act upon my nerves with great luxury of sensation, though I do not impute the luxury to any merit in that which produced it. We may consider such fascinating ditties as does the lover his mistress, when, without beauty, grace, or talents, she has infatuated his passions.—A not very uncommon witchery.

A verse in your second volume of Scotch Minstrelsy enchants me. It lingered many days, nay, yet lingers on my ear, and often steals audibly from my lips, as I walk from room to room,—thus,

"By Flodden's high and heathery side."

It has melody and picture; yet other lines in that volume have an equal, perhaps superior, portion of those graces, and to whose beauty my sense is keenly alive, though over them the thrill of delight is, with me, less exquisite. This partiality must be the result of those associations, of which we

have spoken. I was born 50 miles nearer Scotland than is Lichfield, and passed the first seven years of my existence in my native village, amidst the eminences of the Peak of Derbyshire. Hence the first scenery which struck upon my infant perceptions, with wonder and transport, is brought back by poetic pictures of wild, uncultivated, lonely nature.

To the Peak I often returned in girlhood and youth, after it had ceased to be my home; and on those occasions, I rode and walked almost daily, with my dear father, on the high and heathy side of the mountains which surrounded Eyam.

This darling line of yours, for I feel that it is yours, places me again in these interesting scenes, and brings on my mind a portion of that rapture with which youth, health, and hope, united with poetic enthusiasm, perceive "the great, the wonderful, the fair," in nature, and her works.

You call yourself a ballad-monger; names are little.—Beauty and sublimity are not excluded from any order of verse, and where they are, high claim is established. Petrarch is, on the merit of his sonnets, an immortal classic. Had Milton written nothing else but such sonnets as are the best of those he has given us, and they had been numerous, his fame would not have died.

Your poetry is amongst ballads, what Clarissa

and Grandison are amongst novels. Of those volumes Dr Johnson justly said, "They are not only the first novels, they are amongst the first works of the English language."

You apologize for illustrating your argument by mentioning the different preference your two grand epic ballads have met in Scotland and England, and call that mention egotism. The egotism of mean minds disgusts, that of elevated ones is interesting. Rousseau was the greatest egotist existing, yet lost no reputation by that excess.

On the subject of the Eve of St John, and Glenfinlas, I have found preference divided into two classes here. Amid the circles in which I have recited them, the folk, who are dead to almost all other sublime poetry, were charmed with the former, while they stared, and gave Glenfinlas but coldly acquiescent praise. Those who taste the higher orders of verse, are also charmed with the Eve of St John, but unanimously assert the superiority of the Highland poem.

If I had health and spirits to take long journies, which, alas! I have not, your invitation to Edinburgh would be resistless. I have long considered Scotland as distinguished classic ground, and the idea of being personally known to you increases its magnetism—yet, desponding grati-

tude for so kind a summons, is the sole response of my heart.

I remain, &c.

LETTER VIII.

THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Lichfield, Sept. 27, 1802.

I HAVE to thank you for a charming letter as to talent, though of lamented intelligence respecting Mrs Park's health. So many fruitless medical experiments reduce us to helpless sympathy, and the forlorn hope, that time may subdue, or at least abate, the force of those maladies which pharmacy seems to combat in vain.

Your letter came to me the night before I set out on my summer excursion, from which I returned on Sunday. The renovation of a frame, enfeebled by accident, and impaired by time, was, as it has many years been, the chief, if not the only motive which counteracted my love of home, and dread of journeying. I hoped those good effects to my last-injured knee, which I did not find from Buxton; but it is not perceivably

strengthened by a five weeks residence on the amber shores, the verdant, and pure-breathed downs of Hoyle Lake, nor by twenty-one immersions in its billows, subdued by peculiarity of situation to unusual gentleness.

My return home took its wonted circuit though the peerless Vale of Denbighshire, where I divided an interesting fortnight between the hospitality of my friend Mr Roberts' mansion, amid the sublimities of that scenery which, in unequalled variety, its elevation commands, and the softer graces of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby's enchanted bowers in the vale below, round which the warmth of their kindness, the light of their talents, and the blessings of their benevolence, stream.

Entirely do I agree with most of your opinions on the Poetical Register, concerning almost all the individual poems you praise, and on all you censure, as to admission, and arrangement in the plan of the work; but I confess I do not find in Adeline's compositions, however tuneful and correct, the vital spark, without which verse of the most flowing numbers is but a dead-letter. Mrs West's eight sonnets in this volume, concerning which you are silent, appear to me very beautiful. The editor, Mr Davenport, writes with Mrs C. Smith's elegance, but, like her's, his

muse is too constantly in the lamentable strain. I have called Mrs C. Smith's sonnets, the everlating duns on pity; and one of my literary friends has, by a quotation, too severely, perhaps, styled her, "a puny poet, puling to the moon." That she pules with the pertinacity of a pea-hen, is certain, but we must not allow that she is *puny*. Your own sonnet, in the van of that department, is a very sweet one.

There is also a lovely song, signed J. N., and Dr Sewell's ode is pathetic. The six stanzas of W. Case's Descriptive Sketch, are very fine—the rest not equally striking. Most of Campbell's have considerable merit; and I have found more of merit and new name, than I have time to mention, and to praise.

Yet is your observation too just; the volume is greatly overloaded as to the number of the compositions; and the quaint poetry of ancient days has no business there, neither the terse decisions of review-criticism, whose praise and censure have no *why* or *wherefore*. The comparative quantity of mere verses, duller than the plainest prose, is sadly proponderant in this miscellany. To compile a metrical collection from different sources, is one of the most thorny paths of authorism. The rejection of offered verses is, in effect, to tell their authors, that they are mistaken in

believing themselves poets, and to make the compiler a foe in every rejected versifier. But unless he has fortitude equal to that disagreeable and personally dangerous firmness, he must not hope that his work will acquire lasting reputation.

Dodsley had interest to procure for his first and succeeding volumes, contributions from all the first poets of his day. Mr D. should not have opened his compilation till he had procured them from most of the celebrated writers now living. Some of their names, added to those few of lustre which he has obtained, would, by their value, have more than supplied the place of that shoal of versifiers who have bedimmed the tome.

If, leaning on what he did procure of genuine poetry, he had, with firm hand, lopt away the load of useless and barren shoots, this, his first volume, would probably have induced, by its reputation, other rightly-touched spirits to have adorned its successors. As it is, I am afraid the herd of vapid rhymists will make the poets turn disgusted away from such fellowship.

You recommend to my attention the lately-emerged poems of Dermody. When he was quite a boy, I received a great heap of his verses, in loose sheets, from the press. They were pretty enough for years so early; yet I discerned not in them the germs of genius. I have always con-

sidered it as most extraordinary, that while, through two centuries, Scotland has exhibited strong poetic talent, and England has transcended in its fruits, every other nation of Europe; while Ireland vies with us in prose-eloquence, she cannot boast of one great lyric or heroic poet. Sheridan is an elegant and a brilliant writer, but he has not taken the higher walks of the science. Let us, however, confess that he and Jephson have excelled, in the dramatic line, their English contemporaries.

You say Dermody was in morals, in genius, and in destiny, a second Savage. If his compositions are not better, the task you enjoin will weary me. As I remember, there are not more than fifty lines in the volume of Savage that I would have given a pin to have written. On the credit of the prejudiced Johnson, the public tried to like the poems of Savage. It tugged them up from the oblivion into which they had fallen, but soon let them drop again.

I came home for one day on Sunday se'ennight, but took wing on the next, allured by a grand harmonic festival at Birmingham;—by the opportunity it afforded me of observing how Haydn had shot in the strong bow of Handel; in being able to compare his emulative powers closely, by listening to the Creation one morning, the Mes-

siah the next. Shall I presume to speak to you of my resulting conviction?

By the overture to the Creation I was charmed. The subject is so happy; the imitative harmony so inevitably suggested itself, that a very inferior composer to Haydn must, if possessing any genius, have made a grand affair of it. No wonder then that his genius and science should have produced, in succession, effects so awful, and so exhilarating in this harmonic exordium. First, by that wild and complex dissonance which sublimely represents the tumult of chaos; next, by the low, soft, tremulous, sweet sounds, which arise when that tumult has gradually subsided; instrument after instrument stealing in, and exquisitely picturing on the ear the dawning, expanding, and gradually strengthening light, till suddenly the sun blazes out by the instant fortissimo of the whole orchestra, and by the burst and cannon-exultation of the double drums.

Not one of Handel's overtures suggested, or could properly allow of so picturseque, so dazzling an overture.

But there ended, in this emulative attempt, all approach to the excellence of that peerless master. The recitatives, and their accompaniments, are almost entirely imitative of other sounds, and of motion, and are without sentiment; while to

those instrumental imitations all which Handel has given us in that style are infinitely superior. How poor, in the Creation, are the strains which imitate the lark and nightingale, compared to those of similar aim in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso! How inferior Haydn's plumy concert to that given in the prelude and accompaniments to "Hush ye pretty warbling choir," in Acis and Galatea!

We find an attempt in Haydn's oratorio to represent the soaring of the majestic eagle; but the strains more resemble the darting evolutions of the swallow.

The songs are opera-airs, sweet and ornamented; but they breathe no devotion; they excite no sympathy; they have nothing to do with the passions.

The chorusses are all impetuous, swift, and similar; bursts of harmony, skilful as to science, but, compared to Handel's, unmeaning, with little discriminated melody, and no contrast.

It is little wonder that the words translated from the German almost literally into English, should be neither sense nor grammar, nor that they should make wicked work with Milton; yet we meet poetic beauty in two of the lines, thus,

" With softer beams, and milder light, steps on
" The silver moon through silent night ;"

and the corresponding air is one of the happiest efforts in the composition.

It was with increased veneration for the powers of Handel that we listened, on the ensuing day, to the sublimities of the Messiah ; expressing, in turn, every varied passion of the human soul; that we observed the contrasted pathos and energy, sweetnes and dignity, serenity and scorn, supplication and triumph, in the recitatives and songs, in the duet and chorusses of that stupendous work; to the decided air that winds through the fugues of every separate chorus lingering on the ear, and haunting the fancy through successive days ; to the hallelujah and amen, that ravish the spirit, and seem to pierce the vault of heaven by their sonorous grandeur. Haydn, great master though he be, sinks eclipsed, like Dryden, when, in his alteration of the play of the Tempest, he puts on the armour of Shakespeare.

It will gratify me if the ideas I have ventured to express meet those of Mrs Park, who is a mistress, where I am so shallow a student. Such as they are, I have not borrowed them. No stricture on Haydn's Creation ever met my eye, or my ear.

You will wonder that with limbs so feeble, and health so precarious, I durst encounter perilous crowds and Calcutta heat in the morning and evening performance, three days together; eight hours music out of the twenty-four. It was hazarding martyrdom to the second favourite science of my life. That I have escaped with only a violent cold and inflamed lungs, excites at once my wonder and thanksgiving.

What glorious weather!—How liberally is the sun, in this warm, gay autumn, paying his debts to summer! Adieu.

LETTER IX.

LADY ELEANOR BUTLER, AND MISS PONSONBY.

Lichfield, Oct. 4, 1802.

AH! dearest ladies, it is under the pressure of a severe cold, fierce cough, and inflamed lungs, that I address you. A duty so delightful had, but for this incapacitating malady, been earlier paid.

I have to thank dear Miss Ponsonby for a manuscript of many verses, which she had the

goodness to make for me in hours so engrossed, amid engagements so indispensable. I had the honour to receive it as I was stepping into the chaise which was to convey Mrs Smith and myself far from that Edenic region where we had recently passed so many happy hours; from those bowers in Langollen Vale, whence the purest pleasures have so often flowed to my heart and mind, as from a full and overflowing fountain.

We purposed, as you know, to have reached Lichfield that night; but the stretch was greatly too long, except we had set out with the first dawn of day. Mrs Smith could not travel a stage without her breakfast.—Hence the purposed hour of seven became near nine. It was four when we reached Shrewsbury, where we dined. Night so fast approaching, I resigned all hope of proceeding farther than Watling-Street. The few beds of that small inn were all engaged, and we were obliged to go on to Ivetsy; to travel the heavy, hilly stage between, in the dusk, thickening into darkness, amid the palpable smoke and lurid fires of the Kettley-engines, whose pointed flames, streaming through the opacity, served only to make its darkness visible. After travelling two miles through this commercial Pandemonium, the night became fresh and pleasant. The stars glimmered in the lake of Weston as we travelled by

its side, but their light did not enable me to distinguish the church, beneath the floor of whose porch rests the mouldered form of my heart—dear Honora; yet of our approach to that unrecording, but thrice-consecrated spot, my heart felt all the mournful consciousness.

We were obliged to sleep at Ivetsy, and slumber stole upon the sighs of inevitable contemplation. The next morning, uncongenially gay and golden, brought us to Lichfield. Two days after I had the temerity to put my design of going to the Birmingham music-meeting in execution, and am paying the price for it in my health, though I have escaped without farther injury in my limbs. A great mercy, the immense crowds considered.

I have lately read Mrs Barbauld's essay on Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination, prefixed to her edition of that poem in its first state, for she suppresses the poet's last, and extremely altered copy. I wonder at that suppression, since it is curious and entertaining to compare the two. She appears to me much too hasty in her decision in favour of the first; since, if the bard has, with too severe a hand, lopt away many beautiful luxuriances of his youthful fancy, he has, in the last, rendered a number of passages perspicuous which were obscure in the first; and surely every poetic

picture which he retouches receives added beauty from his pencil.

LETTER X.

Rev. Dewhurst Bilsbury.

Lichfield, Oct. 9, 1802.

It is wholly out of my power to contribute to the lustre of your work by the letters of Dr Darwin. In the whole course of our intimate association at Lichfield I know not that we ever once wrote to each other. Frequent conversations precluded the necessity. Since he resided at Derby our intimacy faded. I heard from him only on having written to consult him as a physician, and neither sentiment, or criticism, found a place in our seldom and occasional correspondence. I hardly think these letters amount to six in number.

While he lived here he was not in the habit of throwing his imagination into his letters; they were rather hurried over as tasks than written *con amore*. I have often heard him say he did not possess the epistolary graces. He told me one day, when I was about six or seven-and-twenty,

that he wished to write to Dr Franklin, to compliment him upon having united modern science and philosophy; and desired I would put his thoughts into my own language. He took his pen, and throwing on paper the heads of what he purposed saying, desired I would give them verbal ornament, and that he would call next day for the result. He did call; and, looking over what I had written, laughingly commended the style; copied the manuscript verbatim in my presence, directed that copy to Dr Franklin, America, and sent it instantly to the post-office by my father's servant.

I mention the circumstance to shew you that at that time of his life he would not have thanked any one for publishing his letters. I have often heard him give it as an axiom, that literary fame always suffers by the publication of every thing which is below its already-acquired level.

Letters, which are either brilliant by wit, ingenious by allusion, or inventive by fancy, are not below the level of the most eminent reputation; but such, I think, are not the letters of the justly celebrated Darwin.

In biography nothing is more displeasing than a picture without shades. Few but have their defects, and the defects of all public characters are too well known not to subject unqualified

eulogium to derision and disgust. We are all aware that "nature is more frugal than to heap together all manner of shining qualities in one glaring mass," and the mind, like the person, should either be justly drawn, or not at all. A painter might as well omit each appropriate distinction of feature, countenance, and form, because it may not be beautiful; and, like Gay's painter, who pleased nobody and everybody, finish his portraits from casts of Apollo and the Venus, as a biographer omit the foibles and weaknesses, while he records the talents and virtues of the subject of his history.

But then it is not by any means a duty to publish composition never meant for the public eye; and which must mortify its author, could he be conscious of its publication; and that from its incapacity to augment the intellectual glory which had already shone on the world.

Soon after we sustained the loss of this distinguished Being, the now, alas! only Dr Darwin, wrote to request that I would endeavour to bring together all the circumstances I could recollect of his father's first establishment in Lichfield, and successive years of residence there. I have, in consequence, proceeded a considerable way in my memoir. It will not, from its shortness, be worthy to be called a life, and still less, from my

utter ignorance of the habits and incidents which marked the course of that period in which he lived at Derby.

My attempt ought long since to have been finished, but ill-health frequently precluding my use of the pen; the perpetual claims of social engagements upon my time; a ten weeks absence from home, and the incessant and unavoidable business of answering letters from literary strangers, have retarded the progress of my little Darwiniana.

It has been shown to several of my lettered friends, who adjure me to offer it to Dr Darwin conditionally only, viz. that he prints it unmutilated, and in my name; and they urge, that unless he pledges his honour so to do, I will publish it myself. Its characteristic traits and incidents are not confined solely to Dr Darwin. Interesting circumstances, and characteristic traits of his friends, are introduced, and also criticism on his writings.

I have spoken of him as he was. Every merit he possessed of intellect and action, is placed in the fullest and fairest light, in which I had power to place it. My anecdotes, as yet, only cover sixty quarto pages, and perhaps eighty will involve all I have to say on the subject.

Be assured I remember with pleasure the pre-

possessing manner, and richly-blossoming talents of Mr Bilsbury, in years past,

" When smooth as Hebe's his unrazor'd lip,"

and remain, with much esteem, his obedient servant.

LETTER XI.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, Nov. 9, 1802.

No indeed, my dearest Madam, I could not suspect yourself, or Lady Eleanor, of forgotten promises. Were the Mysterious Mother and the Orestes never to arrive, I should feel assured that their non-appearance was owing to some difficulty in procuring them. I intreat such difficulty, if it exists, may not be combated, since my curiosity to re-peruse the former, after the lapse of so many years since it was lent me for a hasty reading in manuscript, has been so lately gratified by your lending it me. I can willingly repose upon that

gratification, as the occasional vigour of the composition does not recompense the odious horror, and I trust total improbability, of the story. Mr Sotheby is a pleasing poet, but not of the prime amongst his contemporaries; nor does his former tragedy awaken any restless desire to read the Orestes.

British genius, so rich in every other species of poetic excellience, has, within the last seventy years, given us very few good tragedies. Godwin, of whom I had the highest hopes, from the throbbing terrors of his prose works, has presented a tragic drama to the public which is almost below mediocrity; and Coleridge, who holds the lamp of genius so far higher than Sotheby, soars on waxen plumes in the Fall of Roberspierre; since surely few will read that composition twice, though it is not without some emanations of the Aonian light from whence it sprung.

But in the midst of this, at least, partial dramatic impotence, where most we looked for strength, Lewis has given us what we failed to obtain from either of his superior rivals, a grand, interesting, and original tragedy, Alphonso of Castile.

The general style is not equal to that of Jephson's truly noble dramas, nor yet, though con-

siderably poetic, is it so poetic as Miss Baillie's, in her Count Basil and sublime De Montfort; but as to plot, it is superior to any of hers; busy, animated, and involved, without perplexity. We listen with breathless interest to the progress of the scenes, and cannot pretend to guess at the denouement. Orsino is a grand tragic personage. The author does not aim to make any of the characters perfect; the best of them have their fault, and therefore are they so much the more natural. But if this play deals not in human angels, demoniac villany seems to its utmost bound existing, and is gradually developed in two of the dramatic persons. Like Lovelace, its hero is beautiful and brave, while revenge, ambition, treachery, and murder, busily whisper their fell instigations, as unseen they hover "and glide around Cesario's laurell'd car."

But I am perhaps talking to you of that with which you are familiar. If so, while you have admired the excellencies of this work, you have perceived that the play, as well as its best characters, has its defects; that there is too much about Venus's doves in it; and that similies, and a moral soliloquy are made in situations big with fate. The language of passion, in such moments, is boldly metaphoric, but cannot pause for comparison, or abstract reflection.

Though I know her not, I am pleased that Mrs Spencer has had the good fortune to interest and delight you; for I am always desirous that men of genius should not do what they are so prone to do, marry every-day women.

Naughty brook, for having behaved outrageously again! That little stream of the mountain is a true spoiled child, whom we love the better for its faults, and for all the trouble and alarm they occasion. You see I presume to involve myself, as if, in some sort, the interesting little virago belonged to me. Certainly it is my peculiar pet amongst your scenic children, dear to my taste, as they are beautiful; to my heart, as being yours.

LETTER XII.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq. on his Life of COWPER.

March 7, 1803.

MY dear Sir,—You have sent me an estimable and very costly present, in addition to a number

of past and similar obligations. I thank you with a deep and almost painful sense of gratitude. This duty had been earlier paid, if I could have obtained leisure for that attentive perusal of this interesting biography, which I determined should precede my acknowledgments, that I might not intrude two letters upon your attention.

Partial as you seem to your unhappy friend, these volumes induce me to believe him much more kind-hearted and amiable than the generally severe, and, in some instances, illiberal spirit, which appears in his so infinitely best work, the Task, had led me to imagine.

Cowper's letters, of which those volumes so largely consist, have finally left this impression on my mind;—that he had naturally a mild, compassionate, pious, charitable, and, respecting pecuniary considerations, liberal and independent spirit. Whether from the narrow and miserable principles of Calvinism, with which he was so deeply tinctured, and which lead either to presumptuous trust of acceptance, or to terrors of Divine power, utterly unworthy of its mercy; or whether from a native taint of insanity, I know not, but I see him, with all his inherent good properties, a vapourish egotist. However, after emerging from the mystical and dull jargon of

his letters to Mrs Cowper, he amusingly describes the peculiarities which shut him up within himself.

For, absorbed in himself, he appears to have been ignobly inattentive to the works of poetic genius which have adorned his country from Milton's time to the present. A note in the first edition of his Homer, the only one I have seen, apologizes for his supposed coinage of the word *purpureal*, though Akenside says in his Pleasures of Imagination,

" Amid purpureal Tempe's pleasant scene ;"

and though from the time of that publication the word has been in poetic use. This proves that Cowper had not read, or read without attention, a justly celebrated work, which stands, at least, on as high poetic ground as his own best work, though, together with the still greater Paradise Lost, it is, for obvious reasons, less popular than the Task.

That Cowper also had paid no attention to Chatterton's writings, " of which all Britain rung from side to side," appears from his assertion, that Burns, whose beautiful compositions seem to have been forced upon his notice, was the only poet since Prior's time, whose compositions

stand in no need of allowance from the recollected obscurity of birth and education. He must have heard of Chatterton, and if he wanted all generous curiosity to look into his verse, he had no right to make such an assertion, disgraceful to himself, and unjust to the greatest genius, his early extinction considered, which perhaps the world ever produced.

For you he expresses much personal affection, but it seems to have been because you sought and so highly gratified his self-love, without any mixed consideration of your distinguished talents. Not once does he address you as a poet of eminence, who had diffused the lustre of his genius over the late and present period of English literature.

He often mentions you affectionately in his letters to Lady Hesketh; but no person, who did not otherwise know it, would ever dream from them, that you had so brilliantly preceded him in the race of fame, or indeed had published any thing besides the Life of Milton. Upon that subject he could not avoid speaking to you, since it was connected with his own design, to which you generously offered to relinquish it, though on so advanced a progress.

Now, you forgive Cowper for all this negative injustice to yourself and others. I own I can-

not; and that, as a literary character, it costs him my esteem. His own works are his eternal and nearly exclusive subject. He confesses his earnest desire of public praise, yet satirizes, in the Task, its administration to others, even to the memory of Shakespeare and Handel. Well might that unworthy grudging awaken the disdain of the poetic lady to whom you allude!

Certainly Cowper's letters are those of a mind not ordinarily gifted; yet, if I could forget that they proceeded from a pen which had produced one great original work, they would by no means shew me an understanding responsible for such a production. For the impartially ingenious surely they do not possess the literary usefulness of Pope's letters; the wit and imagination of Gray's, the strength and humour of Dr Johnson's, or the brilliance, the grace, the play of fancy, which, in former years, rendered your letters to me equal to the best of Madame Sevigné's, whose domestic beauties seem to me to throw those of Cowper into shade. I mean the generality of his epistles. Some few of them are very interesting egotism, for all is egotism; such of them as describe his home, his daily haunts, and the habits of his life. Neither can a feeling heart contemplate undelighted the effusions of his personal tenderness for his friends, inconsistent as they

were with the apathy and neglect towards his poetic contemporaries.

You seem in your preface to confine the excellence of letters to one style, whose style may surely be various as that of conversation, which accomplished people do not limit to mere tea-table talk. The epistolary and colloquial excellencies must result from the style being adapted to the subject, and thus becoming in turn, grave and gay, eloquent and investigating.

Allow me to express my surprise, that you slightly and obscurely mention Cowper's love-attachment, which you seem to think the primal source of his long and fatally increasing discontent. General curiosity must be excited on the subject, and will think it has a claim upon his biographer for gratification. Then the well-known circumstance of his purposed suicide, and the accidental one which induced him to forego that design, are material traits in his character and destiny; and their suppression has a tendency to weaken public confidence in the fidelity of representation.

Since the juvenile attachment is only hinted, and the resolve of despair wholly omitted, I wonder those deplorable letters to Mrs Cowper, of which the world would have known nothing, were not also withheld. They weaken our deference

for the understanding of Cowper, and cannot promote rational piety, since events prove that his religion was not that whose ways are pleasantness, and whose paths are peace.

The Bishop of Peterborough spoke to me of his extreme attachment to Mrs Unwin as the strangest thing imaginable; and that, from the utter absence of every thing attractive in her person and manners, and of all intellectual fitness for a companion to Cowper in retirement. If I remember right, he said Lady Hesketh's opinion of her was similar to his own.

I once heard Mr Newton preach a violently methodistical, and consequently absurd and dangerous sermon. Miss H. More and her sisters had requested for him the pulpit of the late pious and excellent Mr Inman, their neighbour: Mr and Mrs Whalley were his parishioners, and I was then their guest in 1791. When church was over Mr Inman expressed deep regret for having, however reluctantly, granted Miss More's request. Now, said he, has this man, in one hour perhaps, rendered fruitless my labour of many years to keep my parishioners free from those wild, deceiving principles, which have turned the heads of half the poor ignorant people in this county. The result to poor Cowper of making Newton his comfortless conscience-keeper, ought to warn

people of strong imagination how they listen to religious fanatics, presumptuously calling themselves evangelical preachers.

No wonder of mine is excited by the reviewer, who, on the testimony of all Cowper's publications prior to the Task, denied him a claim to true poetic genius. "If a man exhibits only Scotch pebbles to sale, no person is bound to know that he has diamonds. Cowper's poems in rhyme do not place him above the level of our minor poets. Strong sense may be found in them, but they want the poetic constituents, imagery, landscape, invention, and harmonious numbers. They have a stiffness, and hitch in their metre. He was in the habit of rhyming with mean words, as *so, go, here, there,* and the whole tribe of insignificants; yet does not seem to have been led into those inharmonious and nerveless terminations by any unlucky prejudice against the use of what are termed imperfect rhymes, with which Milton, Dryden, Pope, Mason, and Gray, occasionally relieved the ear of the reader from the luscious sameness of complete chime, and inspirited their verse. In one of the best rhyme compositions I ever saw of Cowper's, on the twelfth page of your first volume, the opening rhymes are *waste, past, most, lost*; and further on, *done, unknown, flow, brow*; and all these in a copy of verses con-

taining only twenty-two lines. To my ear, however, far from injuring the harmony, they increase it by variety of sound.

The Task, however desultory, however totally planless, is a noble poem, and has, as you well observe, an unperishable constitution. It is more pleasing, of much more general interest than the Night Thoughts, because its themes are various; because the piety is but occasional, though frequent; and has therefore more impressive power when it occurs, than where, as in the Night Thoughts, it forms the chief and exclusive subject; yet surely we must deeply feel that the genius of Dr Young was of a higher order than that of Cowper; the sublime passages are of much greater strength, of much more frequent occurrence.

The Night Thoughts must be forgotten when Cowper is held up as the leading instance of Christian devotion, united, with fine effect, to the poetic effervescence of the human mind; and surely Mr Hayley lost sight of all the great English poets, with Shakespeare and Milton at the head of them, when he calls the Muse of Cowper pre-eminent, incomparable, transcendent, unrivalled, unequalled; epithets which are profusely lavished upon her through the course of these volumes; epithets which can only be applied

with truth to three men of genius in the known world; to Shakespeare, as a dramatic poet, Newton, as a philosopher, and Handel, as a musician; not to Homer, not to Milton; because they stand abreast with each other, and divide the epic palm. Let not applause of distinguished talents be stinted, but let it not be unjust to superior, or even to equal powers, by assertion that the subject of its descant has approachless excellence.

The universal popularity of the Task is accountable from other causes than its imaginary pre-eminence over all other contemporary poetry. Its beauties are unquestionably sufficient to give it considerable rank in the estimation of those who look with ardent, yet impartial eyes on the respective claims of the bards, past and present; while it possesses the power to please and instruct the whole race of common readers, who cannot perhaps comprehend, in any degree which can render them charming, the Paradise Lost, or Comus; Akenside's compositions, or Gray's, except the Churchyard; very little of Mason's, or of yours, except the common-life parts of the exquisite Triumphs of Temper; nor yet of the sublimely fanciful Botanic Garden.

Then the Task, besides its being level to the most ordinary capacity, gratifies two of the most prevailing dispositions of the general mind, its re-

ligious zeal, which exists in countless hearts whose practice it does not govern, and also its strange delight to see human nature represented in the darkest point of view; in whatever expresses disdain of it on earth, and menaces it with punishment and misery hereafter.

I am glad to learn, from your volumes, that Cowper's first edition of Homer has undergone, from his own hand, that corrective discipline of which it stood so much in need. In that first edition I have read it in close comparison with Pope's.

When I had the happiness of being your guest at Eartham, in 1782, I remember maintaining, against your opinion, the possibility, charming as Pope's Homer is, that we might see a still superior translation in blank verse, if ever a man of eminent genius should undertake the work; since rhyme does not, from the nature of the Iliad, seem the best mode of rendering it into English, notwithstanding the assertion of three of my former learned and poetic friends, that Pope's translation makes a finer poem than the original, when the superior harmony of the Greek language is put out of the question; that it contains more poetic matter; that the beauty of the Homeric pictures, and the grandeur of the sentiments are heightened, while a rich veil is thrown over all

the coarseness of the old bard. I did not believe them at the time, but the avowed fidelity of Cowper's translation has established my present faith in their opinion. Waving that imputed superiority, Cowper's measures and expression, so free and generally graceful in the Task, are, in his Homer, stiff and inharmonious; his style loaded with Grecisms, which our language will not bear, and with low and vulgar terms, from which good taste recoils; with strange epithets, which add neither force, nor grace, nor character to the name, as Priamean Hector, crest-tossing Hector, huge Hector, and with the awkward double negative in perpetual recurrence, as

> "He spake; nor white arm'd Juno not complied."
> "He spake; nor Agamemnon not complied."
> "She spake; nor did Minerva not comply."
> "Nor Juno him not understood."

There is also a disgusting frequency of what ought never to be found in verse, either blank or rhyme, viz. lines closing with an adjective, whose substantive begins the next line, thus disjoining what the muses decree should, in no instance, be put asunder; instances:

> "As when the Spring's fair daughter, rosy-palm'd
> Aurora ——

" The brazen wheels, and join'd them to the smooth
Steel axle" ——

" Achilles, after loss of the bright-hair'd
Briseis *" ——

Seldom looking into reviews, I never have read one of their strictures on Cowper's Homer. Some noble passages met my eye on its pages;—passages upon which not even yourself can set a higher value. I am fully sensible of their superiority to their parallels in Pope. The most striking of these instances is the picture of Achilles's horse in the close of the 19th book, just before he speaks to his master. Poetry has nothing finer.—Neither Pindar's nor Gray's Eagle excel it; but instances of Cowper's transcending Pope are rare; the reverse instances are countless and incessant.

It appears to me that the lady who purloined your friend's song, The Rose, had as little good taste as honesty. A quaint affectation of ideas, and unscholarlike awkwardness of expression, disgrace it:

" A rose had been wash'd, just wash'd by a shower,
Which Mary to Anna convey'd."

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* The similarity of sound in the words bright and Briseis offends the ear.—S.

According to grammar construction the word *which* belongs to the shower, and not the rose. Mr Cary, Saville, and myself used to laugh at it, as a disagreeable quiz of a ballad, when we believed it a lady's composition. Since Cary has known it to be Cowper's he told me he had persuaded himself to like it. Such is prejudice.

Another proof how little your friend knew of the poetic literature of England, as it rose and bloomed around him: he says he was the first poet who publickly stigmatized our slave trade. Mr Day's admirable poem The Dying Negro, which, in the strongest colours, paints the guilt and misery of that traffick, appeared in the year 1770, years before Cowper published at all, and it was generally read and admired. Conscious as Cowper must have been how little he knew of the writings of his contemporaries, he should have avoided making such claims for himself, even in a private letter.

The avowed estimation in which he held Hervey's Meditations, and the compositions of Hurdis, gives me little confidence in his power to appreciate genius. It proves, at least, that fanaticism and partiality warped his decisions. The literary world has long pronounced Hervey, as he was, a pompous enthusiast, dressing up trite ideas

in the flowery nothingness of external exclamation.

Detach a few good passages from Hurdis's writings, and he remains a servile imitator of Cowper. Gisborne, too, imitates Cowper, but with better effect. The Village Curate is a disagreeable poem, the Forest Walks a very pleasing work. One of the most disgusting compositions I ever read is a poem of Hurdis, on the death of his sister.

My work on Darwin is likely to displease, for a period, numbers, perhaps, for one that will approve it. The world of letters seem divided in two wide extremes; one half considering him as infinitely the first genius of his age, both as to poetic system, and execution; the other half affecting to hold similar opinions of his writings with those so injuriously avowed in the Pursuits of Literature. I accidentally took up a Critical Review last winter, which says of some writer, in derision—" he professes to like Gibbon's prose and Darwin's poetry." All who implicitly enlist themselves in either of these divisions will dislike my work, and perhaps publickly abuse it.

The same extremes of opinion prevail amongst his acquaintance respecting his moral character; either exalt him as having been almost superior to human frailty, and exclaim with Sir Brooke

Boothby—"Darwin was one of the best men I have ever known;" or stigmatize him as an empiric in medicine, a Jacobin in politics; deceitful to those who trusted him, covetous of gain, and an alien to his God. What can I hope for, who spoke of him as he was.

And now, my dear bard, can you persuade yourself to forgive this merciless intrusion on your time? I hope you will read my letter as I wrote it, at snatches of leisure, and take at least a fortnight to its perusal. I do not ask you to pardon my ingenuousness; since, presuming to speak to you of your work, I could not deserve your esteem had I not spoken honestly.

I am sure you will be glad to learn that your affectionate admirer, Saville, is in existence, and in better health this than in the preceding winter, which was nearly fatal to him. He desires his cordial and grateful remembrances.

Yourself and the world have lost poor Romney; that soul of genius, honesty, generosity, and petulance—and you, yes you have left Eartham! *your once darling Eartham!* but my imagination *obstinately* refuses to separate your image from that dear lovely scene.

Adieu! adieu!

LETTER XIII.

REV. R. FELLOWES.

Lichfield, June 14, 1803.

AFTER a much more than wished delay, perhaps it is in an unlucky hour that I acknowledge and thank you for a letter, interesting as are all your letters, but containing disappointing contradiction of a report, which I flattered myself had some foundation; good fortune, in prospect at least, if not in possession. To find the vision wholly baseless grieves me.

By unlucky hour, I meant the possibility that Harbury may have ceased to be your home ere this letter reaches that place, if by naming midsummer as the period of your probable removal into Suffolk, you meant the ides of this month rather than the rent-receiving period.

If you do change your habitation, may that change increase your comforts! God only knows what changes await us all before the final and constantly impending change, plunged, as we are, in the mischiefs and miseries of another war. I believe the present ministry mean well, but I fear

they have in them the seeds of those ruinous politics which influenced their predecessors. What is more surprising, the contagion now seems to have spread widely amongst those whose wiser councils, during the late contest, might, had they been taken, have saved this nation from the perils which surround it now.

I fear that, in rejecting the offered mediation of Russia, I see the plague-spot of hopless contest in their councils; and that by this step they are rendering themselves almost as reprehensible as their infatuated predecessors. To *them*, to their pernicious measures, is France indebted for that power to aggrandize herself, which every nation that possesses will use.

If England could monopolize the commerce of Europe, would she not do it? If she could extend her territory would she resist the temptation? Then how more than childish the idea, that if Buonaparte could be removed from the world, or from the seat of power in France, with him the spirit which creates our jealousy would die!—It will live in the breast of his successor. Restore the Bourbons, and it would mount from the Consular seat to the throne. No experienced operation of philosophic science is more certain than the influence of national ambition.

If any degree of success to balance or to close the evils of another war at this juncture, were not utterly hopeless; if there was the least chance that renewed hostilities could wrest from the foe that proud supremacy which former hostilities gave to his grasp, it might be wise to attempt it, at almost any price.—Since there is not, why must the nation be beggared so utterly in vain? But a truce with these heart-burning questions; they help not—they avail not.

You ask me if I have read Bloomfield's Moral Tales. Yes, but with a disappointed eye. They are as much below his principal work as Cowper's other writings are below his Task. O what idol-worship is the Hayleyan biography of that man!—of genius so unequal, of principles so unhappy!

I am charmed with what you say about the author of Gebir*, and his other projected epic.

*The sentence in Mr Fellowes' letter alluded to above.—"The author of Gebir, who lives in this neighbourhood, has lately made another attempt to convey the waters of Helicon by leaden pipes, and many dark subterranean ways, into the channel of the Ayon. I have not seen these last effusions of his muse; but, having trod the dark profound of Gebir, I feel no inclination to begin another journey, which promises so little pleasure, and probably where only a few occasional flashes will enlighten the road."

The whole mass of Cowper's letters, so ostentatiously, so over-weeningly vaunted by Mr H., do not contain one passage so imaginative! Such sentences, in which your letters are so rich, teach me to exclaim in the words of Pope,

"How sweet a Prior is in Fellowes lost!"

If you should settle in Suffolk, what an honour for a peasant of that country to have rendered your daily haunts classical! Becoming *your* residence, another age will consider the ground doubly hallowed by sacred eloquence, and by poetic inspiration.

Cousin Henry White is justly proud of the esteem you avow for his character. His best wishes, with mine, hover around your idea. He took my memoirs of Dr Darwin up to town a little time ago. Some demur has arisen since he, as we both believed, settled the business with the bookseller. Delay ensues, unfavourable to biographic composition. Above all other species of writing it is expedient that it should "catch the *aura popularis*" which curiosity breathes, ere it wastes and sinks in expectation. An early copy will be ordered for you. You will find your name on the leaves. I hope you will not think I have taken it in vain.—Adieu!

LETTER XIV.

DR LISTER.

Lichfield, June 20, 1803.

I AM happy to find my acknowledgment of your last kind letter so soon greets you beneath your native skies; that you have given the most alarming symptoms of your late malady to the winds and waves of the Bay of Biscay, and that they have graciously accepted the present. My pen did not pursue you to Lisbon, since your stay there was of such purposed shortness. From your account of that place, in your letters to your mother, which she has kindly shewn me, and from what Mrs M. Powys says of Oporto, we may well exclaim, What an odious country of superstition, ignorance, slavery, and filth is Portugal! The French will take it, and then with how much cant about its lost liberty shall we be pestered.

What an escape you had of being taken on your return! When you were within an hour's sail of the foe, an instantaneous and impervious mist rose on the meridian of a bright and cloudless

day! It did indeed seem a blessed intervention of Providence. I shall love old Fog the better for this business as long as I live.—Till now he has been no great favourite of mine.

All you said to me from Falmouth concerning the motives of your voyage, the good you cheerfully hoped from it, and the manly and Christian resignation with which you looked at its possible failure, was worthy of your fine understanding and excellent heart. The degenerating world has much need of such characters as yours to renovate its enfeebled wisdom, and perishing virtue; and the loss of you would wring many an individual bosom with sorrow; it would impart to mine all a sister's grief:

> " But doubts and fears, that know to trouble love,
> Scatter'd by winds recede, and wide on billows rove!"

Your lovely child's health, and the fast-advancing recovery of your affectionate mother, will prove, I trust, strengthening and cordial to your own convalescence.

Yes, dear Lister, I have every trust in the validity of your dependence that the country's unanimity would boldly meet that haughty foe, which the jealous cowardice of our senate has invited to our shores. But Buonaparte, however

ambitious and grasping he may be, is too wise to fulfil our unfounded prognostic. It is true, he threatened Lord Whitworth that, if we quarrelled with France, it should be fulfilled. That threat, however, was but the tub to the whale, the red cloak to the bull. He knew the meditated hostility of Britain would give him safer and surer means of aggrandizement; and, lo! it has already, ere we have been two months at war, placed Hanover and Hamburgh in his possession!

To increase the power, first of America, and then of France, by those self-destructive means, which it was demonstrably certain would increase it, has been the lamentable system of politics in the British cabinet, from the hour we sought to coerce our transatlantic colonies. In the year 1796, Mr Bell*, in a letter to his friend Simpson, says,—"We have placed a drunken coachman upon the state-box. He is driving down the precipice, and the passengers are crying out—What an excellent whip!—how merrily we ride!"

This war is the child of that crusade against regicide France, the epithet of France in Burke's war-whoop. That long, insane, disastrous contest, which left peace (the only means of restoring

* A barrister of Lincoln's Inn.—*S.*

the national prosperity) so clogged with the mischiefs of the war, as to require more patience, firmness, and wisdom to preserve it, than we could reasonably hope for in a ministry, teased and reproached with pusillanimity, from time to time, by the proud, but, in fact, coward jealousy of so large a number of the senators. How long shall it be the curse of this country to run into real dangers, of the direst magnitude, to avoid imaginary ones? Jacobinism in the last war,—invasion in this. So, like a silly bird, we have dropt into the jaws of the serpent.

Mr White took up my Memoirs of Dr Darwin to town with him five weeks ago. They ought to have been out by this time. Johnson offered an handsome price for them, which Mr White accepted; so I thought them in train for speedy publication; but, on reconsidering the manuscript, Johnson fancies the simple unexaggerated statement of certain facts, which all the world knew at the time they happened, will mortify a certain public character and his connections, with whom Johnson has important concerns; and he says our agreement must be dissolved, if I do not withdraw their mention, or at least greatly soften the genuine colour they bear. Rather than break with him, whom I have announced as my publisher, I have attempted that softened colour-

ing. I cannot suppress them without injuring the singularity and interest of the little episodical history to which their statement is material. If he will not be satisfied with the sacrifice I have taken the trouble to make, in compliment to his scruples, I must seek some other bookseller for the tract, which will occasion great farther delay.

My Memoirs of Darwin were finished ere his posthumous work, the Temple of Nature, appeared. I was not sorry to escape the trouble it would have cost me to make the same analysis of that, which I had made of the Botanic Garden. In the close of the Memoirs, I avow my non-perusal of the work, with my hope that it will not prove unworthy of its author's reputation.

I have since been told that it was dreadfully indecent, and unequivocally profane. Shocked by the accusation, I dreaded to examine its pages; but, on examination, I have pleasure in finding them idle calumnies. The Temple of Nature is no more indecent and profane than the Botanic Garden. Less various, less interesting, though not less poetical in its language and imagery, than that beautiful sport with the Linnean sexualities, it must, in justice, be acquitted of any tendency to shock the purity of the mind, or inflame the youthful passions.

I had heard it was not fit for the female eye.

It can only be unfit for the perusal of such females as still believe the legend of their nursery, that children are dug out of a parsley-bed; who have never been at church, or looked into a Bible, —and are totally ignorant that, in the present state of the world, two sexes are necessary to the production of animals.

To such misses, if such are above ground, and to such only, it can be proper to interdict this posthumous poem of Darwin's. As for the rest, interdiction is superfluous; the work is much too deeply, too abstrusely philosophic for their comprehension respecting its ideas, and too Latinized in its language; while it has nothing for Eveish curiosity, more gratifying than the words "sexual intercourse,"—"solitary reproduction;" of which last, if they can make either head or tail, I will be whipt. So far also from its being an atheistical system of mere materialism, it only demonstrates the unperishable nature of matter, and its constant progress, after death, into other living animals, through the medium of nutrition. It resigns the human soul to the destiny announced to it in the sacred writings.

So far from its being Darwin's design, that this work should proclaim the principles which, alas! he too surely entertained, I am convinced he intended this work should remove from his memory

the infidel stigma. And so much for the voluptuous and improper tendency of the Temple of Nature. Adieu!

LETTER XV.

Dr PERCIVAL of Manchester.

Lichfield, June 29, 1803.

SINCE I received your kind and various literary presents*, coercive claims upon my time and attention, wrested from me many days leisure, which I wished to have employed in an earlier examination of their contents. To have made my acknowledgments upon a careless and curtailed perusal, could only have proved an abortive consciousness, and an inadequate gratitude. My pen is now enabled to pay a tribute of thanks and praise less utterly unworthy.

In these volumes you give the public a blended treasure of medical duties, morality, and Christ-

* Third Part of a Father's Instructions, Medical Ethics, and Biographical Memoirs of Thomas Butterworth Bayley, Esq. F.R.A. &c. &c.—S.

ian faith. Powerfully must it strengthen the professional shield against the imputed irreligion of physicians. Doubtless the lives, the oral and occasionally written testimonies of several of your pathologic predecessors and contemporaries, have considerable tendency to weaken the censure. They have raised repelling mounds; you have built a tower of strength. While hypothetical materialism, rash General of the undisciplined army of second causes, boasts Dr Erasmus Darwin as his chief captain—God and his retributory tribunal; Christ and his expiatory power; the immortality of the soul, and resurrection of the body; the union of pious faith and energetic good works; all that is rational, all that is lovely in the gospel system, will shew to future times, amongst their able champions, the contemporary of Dr Darwin, Dr Thomas Percival.

Your page of consecration has solemn and pathetic simplicity. The events it records had my sympathetic concern when they first reached my ear; and they have often since cost me sighs. Esteem augments into affectionate veneration, when we contemplate the sage who had bowed resigned to deprivations so trying, and see him here risen up—

" To justify eternal Providence,
And vindicate the ways of God to man."

Beautifully does your Fragment introduce your eloquent discussion of that difficult subject, the Divine permission of evil, natural and moral. I never heard or saw it reasoned upon so ably. Pope has thrown around it the richest hues of poesy; but his arguments, or rather his argumentative questions, are brought to no satisfactory conclusion. Little must it console the individual sufferer, that the earthquakes, the tempests, or the flames which have consumed his property; the diseases which have preyed upon his frame, or the afflictions which have agonized his bosom, are not inconsistent with the general order and moral government of the universe. He may learn, on your pages, to extract their bitterness, and make them instruments of his increased virtue, and, consequently, increased happiness, possibly here, and certainly hereafter.

Much would it exceed the compass of my paper, were I to descant on the separate merits of this tract; but none of them have been lost upon me. I must, however, observe, that I am particularly gratified by all you write, with so much just discrimination, on the nature and proper ends of our appetites; and upon those of our nobler

faculty, imagination. Concerning that, you have brought into a luminous focus all the diffuse dissertations of Addison, and the harmonious and picturesque metaphysics of Akenside.

Nor less does my whole heart approve your wise, and much needed, cautions to our clergy, against raising their doctrinal superstructures upon partial texts, rather than upon the general tenor of the Gospel tenets. Had such caution governed the preachers and writers in the early periods of Christianity, it had escaped the pollutions of the Romish church. Had it prevailed from the first establishment of Protestantism, it had precluded the divisions, almost endless, of the sectaries, and the disgrace upon the rationality of the Scriptures, brought upon them by Calvinistic theory, and its presumptuous assertions. They are founded on partial texts of the Apostles, subsequent to Christ, addressed to converts under particular circumstances, and inapplicable to those educated in his faith. In the sense to which they wrest them, they are neither compatible with the justice or the mercy of God, or with the general precepts of the Scriptures.

You have doubtless seen Mr Fellowes's publications. He also is, in this day, a very able champion of pure Christianity. Your cautions to the clergy are the grounds he has taken; but his

charming writings do not seem popular. The proud high-priests stigmatize them as latitudinarian. The human mind is prone to gloomy extremes, either to sink into that broad large limbo of Scepticism,

> " Where violent cross-winds, from either coast,
> Blow it transverse a thousand leagues away ;"

or into the gloomy gulf of superstition. Few tread the straight plain path, though the benevolent rays of Gospel truth shine upon it; for men are disposed to love darkness rather than light:—the sceptics, from pride of intellect and laxity of morals; the Calvinists, because their tempers are sour and malignant. They wrap themselves up in their Pharisaic mantle, and fondly believing it their own shield, scowl from beneath it on the multitude, which they have the arrogance to judge and condemn.

In your Medical Ethics, there are just and incontrovertible arguments against the heinous crime of duelling, that murderous punctilio of Luciferian honour. I cannot, however, think, that any sincere exertions have been made to repress it. Had they been sincere, they must have been efficient. See how the phantom laws against the guilt are scorned and foiled by the

verdict of the juries, invariably and alike acquitting the survivor, whether the challenged or the challenger. Behold Christian kings conniving at the wicked system of their army, which enforces the practice, by holding it infamous to avoid committing murder upon every personal offence, however slight or even undesigned! and behold fashionable society caressing the murderer!

I could wish you had more severely reproved the seconds and surgeons, who, without the irritation of apprehended contumely, promote the enormous crime, by omitting to apprize magistrates of its intended perpetration! Such miscreants, however high their worldly reputation, should be stigmatized and shunned, since they might, and would not, prevent the execution of a design, which cannot be put in act without the probable loss of life, and of the forgiveness of God after death.

Permit me to thank you for the Biographic Memoirs of your admirable friend. He was, indeed, a luminary, whose beams ought to shine from the tomb, kindling the emulative fires in those who survive, and in the rising generation. Your Memoirs will diffuse and perpetuate this monumental light.

I have the honour to remain, with perfect esteem, &c.

LETTER XVI.

WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

Lichfield, July 29, 1803.

A THOUSAND thanks for the third volume of the Border Minstrelsy, and for your letter, which succeeded in a few days. I am charmed with the extract this packet contains from your yet unpublished poem, now on the anvil. The first sixteen lines of that extract glow with your softest tints of portrait, and of landscape. The questions in the next eight lines have a fine effect; the fourth reminds me of this noble passage in Paradise Lost:

> " So Satan stood, and like a comet burn'd,
> That fires the length of Ophiucus huge
> In the arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
> Shakes pestilence and war."

The different nature of the objects considered, your passage has no inferiority; the epithet *wavering* has the most marked appropriation to the beacon's light. You are the first poet who, here

and in your Eve of St John, has done ample justice to the melancholy and ominous flame. Nor less do I admire the ensuing passage; it finely contrasts the quiet graces of that part of this extract. The disorder of the armour, which the lady sees from the castle turret, so hastily brought into the area below, on the discovery of the distant beacon; the simile for the shaken spears,—"Like reeds beside a frozen brook,"—all is in the first rank of poetic writing.

A protest of mine against the frequent and licentious change of measure, which Southey adopts in his Thalaba, and systematically defends, is printed at the close of the first volume of the Poetical Register, which came out in 1802. Its effect did not please me in Thalaba; and I think the practice opens a door to much revel-rout, and confusion in poetry, blending its various orders till all distinction amongst them is lost. Yet I feel that the sudden introduction of irregular measure, succeeding to the gentler trochaic couplets in this extract, produces great picturesque effect. The numerous fires, successively, yet almost instantaneously, kindling on all the hills, rival, in poetic effect, your preceding picture of the first solitary and warning beacon.

You possess the rare art, belonging only to great and original poets,—that of being able so to pre-

sent an impressive object, that, though you may have repeatedly described it, still it shall be new; and that, from varied situation, varied accompaniments, and varied epithets, climatic in their strength.

It is well, for it is needful, that you are preparing in Edinburgh to present to our mighty and incensed foes, the stoutest front of defensive battle. It is now fruitless to reproach that miserable nine years system of British politics, which brought upon this country the perils of this hour. Of those indirect and crooked paths, which involved our violated faith to Ireland, see the consequence so inevitably resulting! If honour, if justice, if the sacred faith of treaties were considered as nothing, self-preservation might have operated to restrain their violation. Was the dangerous epoch of the republic's growing power a season in which to crush the national pride of Ireland, and to wrench away the self-legislation which we had so solemnly pledged to her? The rebellious spirit which has again broken out, and which there is so much reason to fear will be universal in the island, was the sure consequence of that infatuated innovation. It is an hydra-headed monster, whose efforts, I fear, will not cease till the yoke of England becomes exchanged for that of France: An heavier probably—but the burn-

ing sense of perfidy willingly hazards incurring increased evils for gratified revenge. This is nature; and what wise man dreams that he can controul her operations!

You must not consider my little work as a life of Darwin; it neither assumes nor merits a title so responsible. I have not science, I have not sufficient knowledge of his philosophical correspondence, to make any such pretension; and of his literary life, since he left this city in 1781, I know nothing, except through the medium of his publications. To present a faithful portrait of his disposition, his manners, his heart;—to draw aside the domestic curtain; to delineate the connubial and parental conduct of his youth; the Petrarchan attachment of his middle life; its resemblance to that of the bard of Vaucluse, but its better fate; to analyse his poetic claims; and to present singular instances of philosophical love in the eventful history of one of his distinguished friends;—these, and these only, must you expect from my feminine Darwiniana. Johnson has had the manuscript on a high price purchase these three months. Why he delays to produce it, I know not. He is a very laconic personage, and has upon him the penphobia.

And now for the treasures of this third volume of the Border Minstrelsy. There, as in its two

predecessors, you hang elegant prose raiments upon its old wooden-posts of verse. There is but one gleam of poetry in the first ancient ballad, "Auld Maitland"—thus:

> "They rade their horse, they ran their horse,
> They hovered o'er the lea."

That is to the eye, and consequently it is poetry.

The story of "Sir Hugh Bland" resembles that of Lucretia, only that the Scotch lady was wiser than the Roman matron, by making other blood rather than her own the test of her chastity; but Lucrece had a patriotic view in her suicide. After your prose prelude, Sir Hugh and his Lady lose interest and beauty by the rhymes, as David does by those of Sternhold and Hopkins. This ballad is entirely in the murk and muddy morning of Caledonian verse, ere its long bright day arose.

Your prelude to the "Lament of the Border Widow" delights me. Description from your pen is the ring of Fortunatus, and instantly places us in the midst of the scene it so vividly delineates. In the old ditty itself there is, rare to say, poetry, though quaint and uncouth. The last stanza but one is pathetic,—yes, extremely. It should have been final, since that which is final

has a quaint conceit, weakening the strong impression its mournful predecessor had made.

Without one gleam of genius "Christie's Will" is a humorous, amusing ballad. After wading through so many bald and tuneless rhymes, what an effect does their contrast obtain for the lovely lines of Langhorne, which precede your next interesting prose tract, prefixed to the rude "March of Lesley." That morsel of genuine poesy appears to us, after the old poems, as a bust of Roubilliac would do when when we had been looking at a barber's block. How strongly does all the modern poetry of these volumes demonstrate the stupid infatuation concerning the decline of poetic genius in this period; but it has been the cant of the critics in all ages. Genius ever has, and ever must have, to contend with the dulness of pedantry, and with the envy of inferior rhymists.

I confess myself right glad to leave the steril land of rude, unornamented, traditionary verse, for the fair fertile regions of genuine poetry.

First steps forward the Ovid of your fraternity, the melodious, the fanciful Leyden. Ovid, however, has nothing which, through the medium of translation, has half the charms for me as Leyden's Mermaid. The former volumes of Border

Minstrelsy contain delightful effluences from the same clear fountain; but the Mermaid is the brightest of its streams. It opens with a new poetic notice, that of the murmuring sea-shell, amongst the sounds congenial to the thoughts of parting lovers—thus:

> "On Jura's shore how sweetly swell
> The murmurs of the mountain bee!
> How softly mourns the wreathed shell
> Of Jura's shore its parent sea!"

The alliteration of the above stanza has a very picturesque effect. The lavish recurrence of the letter *s* finely imitates the hushy sound (if I may be allowed to coin that epithet) of the sea-shore, and the hissing effect is softened away by the number of intermixed vowels, and by the frequency of the sonorous consonant *m*. These are little circumstances to which no poet should be inattentive who wishes to unite the graces of picture and of melody.

Nor less happy in this poem is the deprecation concerning the sea-snake, and its ensuing description, and the oceanic scenery, page 309. The portrait of the sea-nymph, the helpless sinking of the hero into the deep within her grasp; its simile to the lead-like dropping of a corse into the

water; the well-imagined description of the coral cave; the second portrait of the mermaid in that cave; the reassumption of her monster form;—all are fresh from the plastic hand of true genius.

Your prelude to this poem, with the fabulous legends you cite there, is very amusing.

How rich is Scotland at this period in poets! Mr Sharp is a fine one; witness his Tower of Repentance. The 2d and 3d stanza are admirable—so is the whole of the ensuing poem, "The Murder of Caerlaveroc." It contains an original poetic picture of the extremest beauty—a lady asleep.

> "Unclos'd her mouth of rosy hue
> Whence issued fragrant air,
> That gently, in soft motion, blew
> Stray ringlets of her hair."

Then how natural is the ensuing dream (when wet, as she slumbers, by the blood of her bridegroom) that the waters of the Forth flowed over her! The musical locality of the last stanza but one is striking.

Your epic ballad, "Cadzow Castle," is all over excellence, nothing but excellence, and every species of excellence, harmonic, picturesque, cha-

racteristic. It satisfies to luxury the whole soul of my imagination.

The gay festivity of modern life, with which it opens, and the quiet graces of a cultivated landscape, in the blessedness of national peace, which forms the close, have the finest possible effect, as preceding and succeeding the spirited and sublime story of Regent Murray's assassination. The lifted pall of oblivion discloses that scene in all the interesting customs and manners of the feudal times. Then the interspersed landscapes! You Salvator! you Claude!—what a night scene! —what an animated description of the onset of the morning chase! Your bull!—what a sublime creature!—and O! the soft, sweet picture of Margaret; pale, yet beauteous convalescent from her maternal throes!—It rivals the Alcmena of Pindar in his first Nemean ode.

The Homeric pages have nothing grander than your Bothwellhaugh returning to the chase from the deed of revenge he had committed on the regent.

> " But who o'er bush, o'er stream, and rock,
> Rides headlong with resistless speed?
> Whose bloody poniard's frantic stroke
> Drives to the leap his jaded steed?

Whose cheek is pale, whose eye-balls glare
As one some horrid sight that saw?
Whose hands are bloody, loose his hair?—
'Tis he! 'tis he! 'tis Bothwell haugh!

From gory selle*, and reeling steed
Sprung the fierce horseman with a bound,
And reeking from the recent deed
He dash'd his carbine on the ground."

I read this poem last week to a young soldier of genius, Captain Oliver, nephew to the Duchess of Ancaster. His kindling countenance always, and often his exclaiming voice, marked every beauty as I proceeded. Above all was he impressed with the picture of the regent and his train, and every striking feature there given of a crowded march.

To observe the first effect of noble poetry upon a mind alive to its graces, has ever been to me a gratification on which my whole soul luxuriates.—Adieu!

* Selle, saddle. A word used by Spencer and other ancient writers.—*S.*

LETTER XVII.

REV. R. FELLOWES.

Lichfield, Aug. 31, 1803.

O SIR! the peace, the gladness, the energy of my heart and spirit have sunk in a dark gulf since I wrote to you last, never more, I think, to rise again to light, and to cheer the blank remainder of my existence.

On the fatal second of this month, Mr Saville, the dearest friend I had on earth, passed, in one quarter of an hour, from apparent health and even gay vivacity, to the silence and ghastliness of death. Yes, the pure, intelligent, and amiable spirit fled, never more to animate the graceful form and expressive countenance which age could not wither, many as were the years he had known.

Some threatening symptoms of water in the chest had, a few weeks before, appeared; but, by medical discipline, they seemed entirely subdued. After near a month's recovered health, he was dressing to attend a concert, whither his dearest friends had preceded him, when, after a few mi-

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nutes imprudent stooping over his stomach, a sudden attack of impeded respiration came on, and in less than twenty minutes his dear inestimable life passed away.

Thus in that short, unwarned period, was a friendship of thirty-seven years duration struck from my soul, and with it all that soothed, all that gladdened its perceptions.

O! he was the last-left friend of my youth! Remembrance of all I had previously loved, and lost, leaned on his mutual recollection and tender sympathy. His intelligent smile was the sunshine of my temperate board; the emanations of his naturally-endowed mind, cultured and illuminated by a just taste for literature, and all the fine arts, threw their useful and cheering light on my intellectual pursuits; the fervors of his pure, ingenuous, and pious heart, were my encouragement in the practice of whatever rendered my character in any degree estimable; they were my stay, my consolation under each assailing misfortune;

"Ah now for comfort whither shall I go?
No more his soothing voice my sorrow cheers!
Those placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,
My hopes to cherish and allay my fears!
'Tis meet that I should mourn; flow, flow ye bitter tears!"

My friends assure me no death has, in any person's memory here, been so generally, so deeply lamented. Every member of his cathedral, of which more than forty years he had been the most constant attendant, and brightest ornament, both in the reading-desk * and in the musical service, followed his funeral with choral honours and with deluged eyes. Scarcely were any eyes dry amongst that large concourse of people which flocked around in solemn silence.

Dear Saville was a test character;—no one ever conversed with him freely without esteem and love, except from some dark defect of head or heart in themselves, to repel the influence of that else irresistible goodness, which shone out in his open, his expressive countenance, and breathed in the varied, melodious, and interesting cadences of his voice, both in speaking and when he sung.

Agony over this never to be recompensed privation has subsided in my soul, or I should rather say returns to it by seldomer paroxysms; for at first it was nearly incessant. Hopeless, nerveless melancholy has succeeded, and renders me incapable of exertion. I must entirely break off

* The vicars choral in this cathedral always read the first lesson, and Mr Saville was universally allowed the finest possible reader of the Scriptures.—*S.*

my immense correspondence. It has become so extensive and complicated as to require a large portion of cheerful industry to discharge its duties, even at seldom intervals, to the individuals of which it was composed. Each friend must therefore accept one farewell letter, and then consider me as "free among the dead, like unto them that are wounded and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance and cut away from the earth."

I cannot, however, be so utterly absorbed in selfish woe, though cureless, as to leave wholly unnoticed your last interesting letter; yet permit me previously to thank you for your truly admirable and recent publication*. Its reasoning is demonstrative, amiable in its philanthropy, and faithful to the rectitude of the deity, since God cannot be unjust, expecting to reap where he has not sowed.

Natural, touching, and tender, is your description of the feelings which thrilled your bosom on quitting the curacy of Harbury, and your six years tended flock;—and O! how true is your observation, that we must lose comforts ere we become conscious in what degree they had contributed to our happiness! I thought I had esti-

* A Supplement to the Picture of Christian Philosophy; a work by the same author.—*S.*

mated the blessings of my lost friend's society as highly as possible; now I find—but I will not slide back into the hopeless theme, since no yearnings of the spirit can unclose the adamantine gates of the grave.

The Duke of Grafton's invitation was too promising, respecting the future, to be rejected. Your discovery of his Grace's very confined patronage abates the enlivened colour of your new prospect. I am sorry that on near approach it should thus contract, and grow pale; but from Harbury there was no prospect;—the vernal and summer sun gilded its spacious and mossy meads; but the sun of hope to see more affluent days was not in its horizon.

Your Duke's grandfather was my dear father's early-life patron. He was two years domestic chaplain to his Grace, and afterwards travelled with Lord Charles Fitzroy, the Duke's youngest son, one of the finest young men in England. He died at Genoa, in my father's arms, of a violent fever.

Adieu!—I seem now to have no other use for life than to protect the deprived family of my lost friend; to supply them with the decent comforts to which they have been accustomed, and which, without my assistance, must sink with him, though the relations of his daughter's long-de-

ceased and bankrupt husband, and of her children, roll in unenjoyed wealth, which I fear the descendants of one of the most amiable of men will never partake.—Farewell!

LETTER XVIII.

MRS CHILDERS, SEN.

Lichfield, Sept 23, 1803.

AH! my friend, to a letter kind as your last, I cannot be silent, averse to the pen as dispirited indolence renders me.

Well am I aware that recent experience of anguish, in some degree similar, and perhaps not less poignant, gives you unquestionable right to exhort me to resignation, and to stimulate my energies; but, dear Mrs Childers, comforts and inducements remain to you which exist not in the blank of my future existence. They are powerful to restore you to the level of your former peace, your industry, and cheerfulness. However precious to your heart might have been the protracted life of the husband you lost, you still retain the daily and hourly presence and conver-

sation of several equally dear to you; for to a tender mother what can be dearer than such children as you are blest with, in the prime of ripened youth and excellence? Yes, they remain to render the world still an interesting scene to you, full of consolation, nay, of joy.

Friends remain to me in Lichfield whom I very much esteem, and with whom I can often converse; but, in comparison of him I have lost, they are the friends of yesterday. He was all that remained to me of my youthful years, and best days, and in him, those whom my heart as passionately loved, my sister, my Honora Sneyd, my father, have all died again.

Thus no possibility of any thing resembling recompense exists for me on the wide, wide earth, since "I can no longer talk with Saville, or find his steps in my mansion and my bowers;"—since of all the scenes around me; of all my favourite pursuits; of whatever delighted my ear, my eye, and my understanding, his society was the vivifying soul.

Gleams of cheerfulness seem, at intervals, to return, when I am conversing with intelligent people; but those gleams only faintly play on the surface of my mind; a deep sense of desolation has its dwelling in my heart. Hence the

often but assumed, and always frivolous gaiety of mixed society, must be disgusting. Dissipation has an irritating and caustic influence on sorrow.

Beneath this consciousness I shrink from encountering the ever-circling round of parties, in which I have so long been accustomed to mingle. Public calamity and danger always crowd our little city with gay and dissipated military men, and our parties with strangers. I, who visited almost every genteel family in the place, cannot resume them partially; and surely the gradations of subsiding anguish should succeed each other calmly, not disturbed by uncongenial gaiety.

You, my friend, have not only duties, but tender affectionate interests, which combine to reenergize your mind. I have duties, and they shall not be neglected; but I have none of those interests left. My duties, however, do not, like yours, involve the necessity of mingling in complicated society. It will not miss me, nor have I any to lead into it, to whom my countenance and support are necessary.

Time, the best friend of the deprived—great physician for wounds deep as that under which my heart has bled, and still bleeds,—begins somewhat to tranquillize my anguish; but exertion

continues irksome. I can read, or rather pore over books, and that is all of intellectual employment from which I do not recoil.

The reflections you draw from the lapse of sixty-seven years, which had passed over the head of my dearest friend, are just; but very uncommon exemptions from the general decays and infirmities of such ripe existence, combined to allure and support my belief of his longevity. Though his once luxuriant and raven hair became tinctured with grey in middle life, and his temples thus prematurely had borne the blossoms of the grave, yet powder always concealed those dim prognostics; and a constitution of serene, though never robust health, without one tendency to chronic disease; the purity of his morals; the innocent gaiety of his spirit; the temperance and undeviating sobriety of his whole life; the perfect shapeliness of his limbs to his last hour, with a form neither slender, nor in the slightest degree corpulent; the healthy hue, and firm texture of his gums and teeth, in which there was neither decay, nor loss, nor blemish; the silver clearness of his ever-harmonious voice in conversation, in reading, and in singing; intellects, whose strength and glowing fervour time had nothing chilled; all these circumstances appeared to my mind in vivid array against the occa-

sional and sudden, though generally transient return of nervous symptoms, the vestiges of a long and dangerous nervous fever in the summer 1792. From that period they obliged him to decline all professional engagements beyond the limits of this choir, since he could never depend upon their omitting to seize him on the evening when he might have pledged himself to a public orchestra. But then he was often exempt from that sudden faintness during many days, and sometimes weeks; and then, in the intervals, he was all himself, his early and best self, alike when he conversed, or read, or poured the soul-breathing strains of his full, clear, mellow, and singularly extensive voice. It was, at will, a tenor, a contra-tenor, or bass.

He had always an exterior so uncommonly juvenile, that at thirty, he seemed not more than twenty; at forty appeared scarcely thirty; nor ever, even in this final year, did he, when dressed, appear to be more, if so much, as fifty. Only two days preceding his dissolution, he met at my house a large conversation party. Ah, with what grace and spirit did he recite by heart Courtenay's Character, in verse, of the complicated and stupendous Dr Johnson? On his leaving the room soon after, during a few minutes, how did two gentlemen, strangers to him till then, praise the gracefulness of his address,

the spirit of his conversation, the justness, the music, and variety of his recitation!

Almighty God! little did any of us imagine that a vital lamp, so luminous and clear, both corporally and intellectually, was so near its everlasting extinction! Nay, how little was that extinction to be foreseen twenty minutes before it happened!

To this moment the event often seems as a terrible dream; and when reflection insists upon its reality, existence darkens beneath the assertion into a night, on which the morning of gladness will break no more.

Dear friend, I have trespassed largely upon your indulgence in this repetition of mournful descant. My pen, like my thoughts, cling to one subject.

I will, however, tear myself from it, while I observe that I mentioned your recommendation of Colonel Chester's lady to all the friends whom I have seen since you wrote to me. She heard that I had, and in consequence was so good to honour me with a morning visit. Hearing that she meant to do so, I sent her a billet, expressing my regret for not being able, at present, to wait upon her, and my sense of her kindness in the purposed call.

She came.—I think her manners very engaging.

The intimacy subsisting between herself and Mrs Childers, junior, prevented our meeting as strangers. Yourself, that lady, and your own daughters, were our chief theme, and congeniality of opinion gave it interest. A little also we talked of Major André's lamented fate; and she expressed to me the long regret it had caused Sir Henry Clinton, of whom her filial remembrance was expressed with tearful eyes. From her youthful appearance she must have been born to Sir Henry in a late period of his life.

I am tempted to insert an epitaph which I made upon my lamented friend.

The Dean and Chapter have given me leave to erect a monument for him in the transit aisle of this cathedral. The design is simply elegant. It will be placed in a gothic niche, constituting its frame. That niche is an oblong square, with an elliptic arch above. The whole of the niche is filled up with dark grey marble. Upon that a tablet of white marble contains the name, and date, and the verses. The square is separated from the arch above, by broken fragments of white marble, as pieces of a rock.

Upon those fragments, and as carved from them, stands a beautiful antique urn, of the same spotless material. It stands in the arch, and a column of smoke ascends from it, emblematic of

exhaling life. It will cost me an hundred pounds, and never never could I part with money so willingly, as for this last *last* tribute to the memory of my dearest friend.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF

JOHN SAVILLE,

Forty-eight years Vicar-choral of this church. He died August the 2d, 1803, aged sixty-seven.

ONCE in the heart, cold in yon narrow cell,
Did each mild grace, each ardent virtue dwell;
Kind aid, kind tears for others' want and woe,
For others' joy the gratulating glow;
And skill to mark, and eloquence to claim
For genius in each art the palm of fame.
Ye choral walls, you lost the matchless song,
When the last silence stiffen'd on that tongue!
Ah! who may now your pealing anthems raise,
In soul-pour'd tones of fervent prayer and praise?
Saville, thy lips, twice on thy final day,
Here breath'd, in health and hope, the sacred lay.
Short pangs, ere night, the fatal signal gave,
Quench'd the bright sun for thee,—and op'd the grave!
Now from that graceful form and beaming face,
Insatiate worms the lingering likeness chase;
But thy pure spirit fled, from pains and fears,
To sinless,—changeless,—everlasting spheres.
Sleep, then, pale mortal frame, in yon low shrine,
"Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!"

The last line is Dr Johnson's. My imagination refused to supply me with one equally applicable, therefore was it adopted.

I hope Miss Childers is free from that disease which hung about her in the spring, and also that the fair convalescent and her young olives are well.

Adieu, dear friend, adieu!

LETTER XIX.

REV. T. S. WHALLEY.

Lichfield, Sept. 28, 1803.

MY dear friend,—A gentleman told me, a few days since, that he had read an account, in a newspaper, of the death of your excellent mother, together with a character of her, and a mention of ninety-nine years announced to be her age. No such event has had a place in the paper I take in, —the English Chronicle, or Whitehall Evening Post; neither had your marriage. Thence my long ignorance of that event.

Conscious of Mrs Whalley senior's very ripe existence, I did not think it had reached the verge

of a century, but believed ninety-three or four had been the utmost. Be that as it may—neither the far-lengthened flight of days or years, nor yet those infirmities from which your beloved mother was exempt—nothing but the sight of hopeless and great bodily sufferings, can prevent our thinking it too soon to lose a dear friend, even after the most protracted longevity.

I am glad this second deprivation was withheld till you had found an object of affection equally dear with the two you have lost within the short space of a couple of years. You grieve, but you do not sicken at the sun:

> "The world is still an interesting scene,
> And full of joy for you."

As you lament, so did I lament the loss even of my dear "child-changed father," though after the deep eclipse of his shining intellects; since balmy sleep, relished food, exemption from pain, and the never-extinguished delight he took in my attentions to him, rendered his dim existence a cherished blessing to me, nor could I resign it without much of that tender regret and sorrow, which I know you feel; but, as to you, so to me one dear friend remained on earth to sooth and console me; one with whom I could hold daily

and precious converse. Beneath that graciously continued boon of Heaven, my soul revived, as yours will revive, to its sensibility of the charms of nature, the exhilaration of society, and the delights of literature. So fared it with me through the course of thirteen peaceful, cheerful, happy years, after my filial tears were exhaled: Now, on all those sources of gladness, the pall of the last-left friend of my youth is fallen; and it is dark and impervious.

Alas! what an egotist is woe! I meant to have dwelt on your loss and consolations, and behold me sliding back into my own anguish!

Except these words—"the bell rings, and I must go to church," the following were the last I heard my dear friend speak: "Look at this beautiful engraving of a design for a monument to Handel. I know you dislike writing epitaphs after having written so many; but you must write one more for me, to occupy the blank space here left for an inscription."

I replied, "We will talk of that hereafter—but now play a concerto with me." He did so till the evening prayer bell rang, and he went cheerfully away—to return no more!

Alas! I have written one more epitaph—obeyed the injunction of those almost latest words, though their meaning applied to his adored

Handel. O Heaven, that they should prove an unconscious prophecy of his own impending fate!—so nearly impending!

You, I know, will write, if you have not already written, an epitaph on your first beloved wife, and on your mother. I hope you will send them to me. I always love your compositions, but poignant sympathy will give triple dearness to these. Adieu! Adieu!

LETTER XX.

MRS STOKES.

Lichfield, Nov. 5, 1803.

I AM truly sorry for what you must have suffered from your darling son's dangerous illness, the scarlet-fever. Its contagion and its fatality, make it a petty plague. I congratulate you on his recovery. To his father's skilful, bold, and decisive measures, he probably owed his life. Fortunate in being at home when the disease seized him, you were equally fortunate that it did not spread through your family.

Very pathetic, and very just are your reflections

on the subject; so are they on that of my sorrows; on my indolent sense of a surrounding desolation, from which I cannot pleasurably be roused. Often, indeed, within these two months, have I been painfully roused from it by the unfeeling conduct of a certain person towards the distressed family of my lost friend.

I remain still a voluntary prisoner within my own gates. To pass them is unavoidably to rush into that "flux of company, from which the deprived spirit longs to keep apart." Dissonant to all its feelings are the lively tones of unpartaken hilarity. Repose is all I wish for; quietly to wait the probably near approaching period of my advanced life. Within these yet loved, though desolated walls, to set up my earthly rest,

> "And shake the yoke of inauspicious claims
> From this world-wearied flesh."

But I fear it will not be granted me. There is an impending necessity that I should make one visit to dear Mrs Martha Vernon, and Miss Vernon, who, once in four or five years, visit Mrs Greaves. In infancy I was their play-fellow, and in youth their companion, on their frequent visits to the Dean and Mrs Addenbroke.

They have always treated me with condescend-

ing kindness, and are so good to speak of my society as an added inducement to this their visit.

Seeking them, I must also seek many neighbours of this town, who have been so good to come to me in my attempted solitude; else they will say that rank has attractions for me which equality has not.

"The cry is still they come!"—these threatening invaders! Mr Pitt has brought his "indemnity for the past, and security for the future," to a precious conclusion truly! Perhaps the time is on near approach, whose miseries may teach me to say, with somewhat like resignation,

> ——————"Saville's in his grave!
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
> Mischance has done its worst; nor steel, nor fire,
> Tumult, or fear, or pain, or furious foe,
> Nothing can touch him farther."

But, ere I can say *that* without anguish, public safety must reel from its foundations with palpable struggle. Adieu! Adieu!

LETTER XXI.

Mr Todd.

Lichfield, Dec. 15, 1803.

Ah, Sir, I fear you have thought me remiss and unmindful of my many obligations to you, by suffering your kind letter of July the 12th to remain so long unacknowledged. It had not been so, but that deep anxiety, terminating in irreparable loss, threw my mind into a state incompatible with the discharge of its serene and pleasing duties. A short time before I received your last, the dearest of all my friends returned from a month's excursion into Cambridgeshire, a feeble convalescent, after three dangerous attacks sustained in that absence, and generously concealed from his family and myself. We received cheerful letters from him, which bore no note of the dread symptoms by which he had been assailed The alarming state in which we received him back, put to flight every thought of my purposed journey to Buxton; yet the medical assistance he received here, seemed to have subdued his disease, and he recovered to more than his preceding level

of health, strength, and vivacity. Ah! cunning flattery of art and nature! amidst their exhilarating promises, and the congratulating smiles of his many friends, he remained near three weeks, yes, till within twenty minutes of his death.

With him the records of my youthful life are passed away; with him they were mutual and poignant remembrances; with my friends of later connection they are but cold hearsays. When I speak of them, I do but think they listen indulgently to what they deem the uninteresting descriptions of advanced life, fond to tell the tale of other times. So will it be with all who survive those dear contemporaries who had ran with them the sprightly race of youth and sensibility:

> "Those best of days that crown life's year;
> That light upon the eyelids dart,
> And melting joys upon the heart."

Time, which had silvered the locks of my departed friend, had not, in the slightest degree, chilled his native and fervent enthusiasm; his generous credulity towards all apparent worth. O! he was one of the very few,

> "Who uniformly bear to life's mild eve,
> Immaculate, the manners of the morn."

My soul's convulsive shock when I was sent for home from the concert to meet the dreadful annunciation!—O! Sir, you have a feeling heart, and will not wonder that all lesser considerations vanished from my attention, and returned not to it through many succeeding weeks. Till Saturday seven-night, these gates have formed the impassable limits of my feeble steps. It was not till then that I could assume fortitude to pass the silent grave, in which my soul's dearest comforts for ever lie, till it shall itself be emancipated, and seek, as I trust, the realms of pardon and everlasting peace.

Four months endurance of irretrievable privation, have enabled me to wear the semblance of cheerfulness in conversing with that herd of acquaintance, from whom it were folly to expect genuine commiseration; but it is only semblance. My heart feels as if it was encircled by barriers of ice against all interest in present circumstances; —ice which only dissolves when, by the power of recollection, I recal the days and years that are flown.

Thus, Sir, while I cannot stoop to claim the sympathy of my common, though old acquaintance, by this long dissertation of sorrow, I have claimed it of you, to whom I am personally a

stranger; and that, from a deep-seated conviction that yours is a heart not of the common and callous stamp.

I wish your Cambridge excursion had more fully answered your purpose. It surprises me, however, that any thing can remain to be gleaned concerning eminent characters at such great distance of time; but, in past generations, biographic research had not its present vigour, to recal the traits of departed genius,

"From the dark shadows of o'erwhelming years."

Thank you for mentioning the instance of poetic talent in our worthy Diocesan of the seventeenth century. His monument, I will not say adorns, for its sculpture is rude, but honours (in being his) our cathedral.

It has been told me that he built this house, in which I have lived from my thirteenth year, and with a view to induce his mitred successors to reside in Lichfield. No bishop, however, has inhabited it since it was built in the year 1687.

I am gratified that you like my theoretic Scotch (as Mr Scott pleasantly calls it) well enough to quote two of its lines. What a charming volume is his third of the Border Minstrelsy!—how enriched by the beautiful compositions of Edin-

burgh's poetic triumvirate, Taylor, Leyden, and Scott—the last of whom is foremost in the ranks of our existing poets; bold, original, imaginative, and sublime.

He has honoured my Auld Willie's farewell with a place in this third volume.

Johnson the bookseller purchased, and was in possession of my Memoirs of our late splendid poet, Darwin, in May last. Far from being impatient of its long delayed appearance, I wish it might never pass the press. In it, however, at length, it is, and I receive the proof sheets, from time to time, by the post. I have a miserably careless eye, and it revises unassisted. He is for ever gone who used to correct all my writings, whether in prose or verse, with judicious skill and vigilant attention. There could be no better judge of elegance in either style. Mr Johnson's press-corrector revises the proofs before they are sent to me, and he seems to be a man of letters. Several misprints, however, I have detected which had escaped his notice—one curious instance: I wrote, "Sir Brooke Boothby had much external elegance; elegance which time hath but little tarnished." It came to me printed, "Sir Brooke Boothby had much external *eloquence;* eloquence which time had but little tarnished!"

With what sneers would the reviewers have

marked the nonsense, and believed it mine, desiring me, with mock respect, to instruct their ignorance concerning the meaning of external eloquence, and tarnished eloquence.

I have desired Johnson to send you an early copy—a poor return for rich donations from the press, which I have received from you. If not the widow's, it is the woman's mite in biography. The biography of a philosopher! Ah! is it not Omphale wielding the club of Hercules? Adieu!

LETTER XXII.

LEE PHILIPS, Esq. of Mayfield.

Lichfield, March 6, 1804.

AH! dear Sir, what a loss have I sustained since we last met! Your long and fervent attachment to one of the best of men, must have made you deeply feel and deplore it, but the resulting anguish will never from my heart. Acquainted as you are with all the mournful particulars of our suddenly blasted hopes for a life so valuable, in which a constellation of fine talents

illuminated its piety, and warm benevolence its energy and ingenuousness, I will not farther pursue this theme of unavailing woe, but turn to a character of much more *eclat*, but of infinitely less heart. Permit me to combat for him the accusations in your letter, which appear to me unjust to his claims as a poet.

Surely our great bard of imagination, Darwin, whom I consider as, by turns, the Claud, the Salvator, and the Titian of verse, cannot be truly accused of repetition in his scenery! Ah! whose is so various, so contrasted, so vivid? Then his style, which you criticize on the same ground, though marked and peculiar, is spirited, polished, and harmonious in a degree which I should think must preclude satiety to every ear delighting in the beauties of rich luxuriant rhyme.

Candour was not, I confess, in the number of Darwin's virtues, but I believe him wholly guiltless of the plagiarism for which you arraign him*.

* "I consider your account of Darwin, in your Memoirs, as most faithful a true, and at the same time a friendly likeness;—but I cannot assent to your claim for him respecting originality of design, since I am in possession of a most fanciful poem on the same subject, written 150 years ago, at which the Doctor has not even condescended to hint, for which I cannot forgive him. It is addressed to Camerarius, the first discoverer of the sexes of plants, on which the Linnean system is founded. This poem is the groundwork of Dr Darwin's

Though, at length, his poetic genius burst through all the obstacles of his various professional studies, and of his immense and incessant practice as a physician, yet he never had leisure to read obsolete compositions. He, I believe, read neither French, nor Italian, and knew nothing of the elder English poets. Even with Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, he was not by any means familiar. Pope and Akenside, Collins, Gray, and Mason, were his favourite English classics.

You do not say in what language the poem, concerning which you accuse him, was written.

I never heard of it, who was always much more versed than was Darwin in the nearly forgotten compositions of olden time. My little poem on the cultivation of his valley, and which he afterwards, somewhat unfairly, incorporated into his own great work, was, I am sure, the spark which lighted up the rich magazine of his genius. I witnessed the first pleasurable start of the idea in his mind, recorded in page 130th of the Memoirs; that of making new Ovidian metamorphoses from the sexual system of plants, which

and ought to have received honourable acknowledgment on his part; otherwise, when the basis of his work is known to the world, his candour will receive a deep wound."—From Mr Lee Philips' letter.—S.

he always spoke of as first discovered by Linnæus.

The coincidence of idea with that of another poet, respecting the plan, is very credible; but if similitude of separate parts, of sentiment, of landscape, and of imagery can be traced, it may be such as to exceed all probability of coincidence, and bring home the charge of plagiarism. Yet, even then, why was Darwin bound to do that which many of his renowned predecessors had omitted to do, viz. to produce the rude blocks upon which they modelled their exquisite forms? Mr Hayley, in his Life of Milton, has given the Italian Drama, which is a skeleton of the plan of the Paradise Lost, while the *prima stamina* of all the Edenic scenes, images, and sentiments, may be found in Sylvestris' translation of the French poet, Du Bartas. For the Pandemonian scenery, it is well known how large were Milton's debts to Homer, Virgil, and particularly to Dante; yet the discovery of all these sources our glorious epic poet left to time, and the researches of his readers.

Mr Thomas Warton's priceless edition of Milton's lesser poems, shews us the plan and thoughts of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso in old Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. Even Shakespeare,

the most original poet in the world, built almost all his dramas on ballads and old tales, and on history. Virgil makes no acknowledgment of all he took from Theocritus and Homer.

Not one of those great masters point back to their fountains; and who, for that omission, reproaches them with want of candour? Why, therefore, should that charge be brought against Darwin, if indeed, which I do not yet believe, he built upon buried foundations! You surprise me still more by considering him as having written to the capacity of the vulgar. Never was poetry less calculated than his to that meridian.

It requires native taste for the Aonian art, and long familiarity with its produce, to comprehend and admire the charms of his philosophic, metaphoric, and allusive verse, with all its sonorous Latinity of style. If his materials are heterogeneous, he renders them admirably subservient to poetic purposes;—his arch-chemic wand turns the commonest metals into gold;—but it is such gold as the common mind knows not to appreciate;—when a mind of ability takes it for tinsel, great to me seems the wonder.

Darwin knew that his verse would live to distant ages; but he also knew that it would survive, by the slowly accumulating suffrages of kindred genius, when contemporary jealousy had ceased to

operate. With that longevity, present circulation had not much to do. I have often smiled to hear him boast of his "so much money per couplet," conscious, as I was, that it was an artful way of telling us how highly his talents were rated. Himself and his bookseller, aware how little, by the mass of readers, poetry of the higher orders was relished, depended for the sale of the work chiefly upon the novelty of the design, and the variously scientific instruction of the notes;—but, after he commenced poet, not one of the tribe was ever more tenacious of poetic fame than Darwin. To accelerate that, he concealed his ambition and exulting consciousness of his right to its palm, in the mask of worldly thrift. Darwin would not have written meanly, for any price that folly would have paid him for stooping his muse to her level.

Adieu, dear Sir! The family of your highly and justly esteemed friend, through twenty-five happy years, are comfortably established, and all his debts are discharged. God gave me the means—and my best use for life is to fulfil all that I am conscious he fervently wished. I remain, with much esteem, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

LIEUT.-COL. R. WOLSELEY.

Lichfield, March 21, 1804.

AVOWED approbation from those whose talents we rate high, in whose sincerity we confide, and for whom we feel affectionate esteem, is the fairest and most precious meed of intellectual exertion meant for the eye of the public. Your obliging letter confers it; but, as in all other sublunary pleasures, bitter mixes with the sweet;—you are out of health, and military duties, even though yet they are bloodless, bear hard on a delicate constitution, which malady is in the habit of assailing.

I do not expect to live till the belligerent furor of the English shall subside so far as to render them capable of perceiving the folly, the insanity of attempting impossibilities; till they shall cry with a voice so universal, that their government must listen to it,—Give us peace. Alas! what but increase of danger to us, and great acquisition of power to France, has the recommencement of hostilities brought against us!

Crossing the Tweed, you will find yourself on classic ground, as you well observe.—So indeed are you now; the memory of Akenside ought to consecrate and inspirit the banks and streams of the Tyne; but no kindred spirits wander with you through that scenery. It would, I dare believe, be otherwise where the Doon, the Ayr, and the Forth, yet murmur the name of their bard of nature, whose memory, like a trail of light after sunset, yet plays on their waters. I have been in correspondence with the present poetic luminary of Scotland—the author of her late epic ballads; the historian of her minstrels; the amiably partial reviver of their crude unripened strains. If the testimony of familiar letters may be trusted, the poet of "Glenfinlas," "The Eve of St John," and of "Cadzow Castle," is as friendly and ingenuous as he is great; and, with the few whose praise is fame, distinguished in the powers of imagination. I had just finished a letter to him of great length, when the sudden and dreadful stroke of deprivation fell on my heart, the fatal, *fatal* 2d of August last. I added a few incoherent words, that spoke of my irreparable loss. They adjured him not to answer my letter —they said I should never be able to resume the delights of literary intercourse—and so, in the first bitterness of my despair, I sent away my let-

ter. Mr Scott obeyed my injunction; but he had often previously assured me how welcome to him would be any friend of mine; therefore I make no scruple to inclose a billet for your introduction. He lives in the near vicinity of Edinburgh, amidst a knot of ingenious and learned men of his friendship, of his school, at least four of them, who are genuine poets; Leyden, Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Jamieson, and Mackenzie. Scott is the sun of the sphere, and those, his bright pleiades, move amicably before him, "shedding sweet influence."* You will find the memory of Burns is much more forcibly consecrated in Scotland than we consecrate that of our yet greater Chatterton. It appears to me that somewhat the same sort of difference subsists between the genius of Chatterton and Burns, as between that of Young and Cowper; the strength, spirit, and sublimity with the two senior bards, the home-sympathies and common-life interest with the juniors.

"Events are none," to use a Miltonic mode of speaking, since you travelled north; I mean here, or hereabouts; since fine assemblies, though beyond all Lichfield-precedent splendid, are not worth that name. One was given by Lord Sp. Chichester and the Comte de Beaujoilois. Tickets were sent to Susan and myself. She joined the

gay throng, but it was no scene for me. I sat at home and moralized the circumstance. A Prince Royal of France giving a ball at Lichfield, and presiding there! Twenty years ago, how very a Cassandra would she have been called who had prophesied the occurrence! Deplorable and big with danger to the very existence of this country have been the vast events which brought it to pass.

I am glad you have the amusement of studying a new language*. I recollect the high compliment paid to its tones by him who said, we should speak in German to our horses, in English to our birds, in Italian to our mistress, in French to our sovereign, and in Spanish to our God.

Campbell is an admired Scotish poet of this day; but I find not in his verse that originality and fire which distinguish Mr Scott's.—Adieu!

* The Spanish.

LETTER XXIV.

Dr Percival of Manchester.

Lichfield, March 28, 1804.

I am much obliged, dear Sir, by your friendly observation on the subject of that paragraph which I sent to the reviewers, acknowledging my conviction that the current and universally-reported exclamation of Dr Darwin's, on being told that his son's body was found, had been a groundless report; but it was not in my power to give a full detail of the evidence on which I had mentioned it. Individuality was sunk in the number of detailers; yet probably that multiplicity of branches had one root, in the inventive brain of some person who had knowledge enough of Dr Darwin to make him speak, characteristically, words he never said.

I sent Dr R. Darwin a copy of what I wished might be inserted in the reviews, as my attested belief that the expressions his father used on that lamented occasion had been mistated. He objected to the paragraph, as being too long and

needlessly explanatory. After several letters had passed between us, and my spirits had been harassed on the theme, I left, in a great measure, to him the form and manner of this corrective attestation.

The late Dr Darwin's family seem dissatisfied with my impartiality. I see they wanted to have had only the lights in his character shewn, and all its shades omitted. On the contrary, several of my friends murmur that I have not, as they term it, sufficiently stigmatized his irreligion; at least his long insinuated contempt of revelation, and of what appeared to him the improbability of the mediatorial sacrifice. Others are chagrined that my father's satirically-playful epigram found no place in the memoirs of Dr Darwin. You have probably seen it. Its subject was the motto he inscribed on his family-arms, which are three scollop-shells, *Omnia e conchis*, allusive to his favourite hypothesis. On his chaise, in the year 1770, he painted the arms thus inscribed. Soon after my father wrote and sent him the epigram. Secretly resenting, he affected to laugh it off, but painted his chaise afresh, omitted the arms and their motto, and substituted his cypher. Though my father never published the lines, the sin of having written them was never forgiven by him

with whose strange system they had sported. Friends till that hour, Dr Darwin never afterwards mentioned my father with respect.

As to the Memoirs, neither party, whose complaints are so opposite, have taught me to repent that I endeavoured to poise the agitated scales of characteristic opinion and of criticism, with an even hand, while I respected the feelings of Dr R. Darwin too much to lash with acrimony that unfortunate and fastidious proneness to scepticism, which iced his affections, and bewildered his great and noble understanding, in the blind mazes of metaphysic conjecture.

Besides my tenderness for the filial sensibilities of a gentleman whom I greatly esteem, I always disliked invective on religious opinions; thought it ungenerous, intolerant, and contrary to the very spirit of the New Testament, which commands us not to bring a railing accusation against our brother. Neither can I be sorry for having declined to engrave, by the sharp point of epigrammatic satire, Dr D——'s greatest error on the exulting memory of splenetic bigots, and malevolent enviers of his well-earned fame, both medical and poetic. It was surely sufficient, seriously and calmly to express regret for that error, and belief that it was the source of all which appeared defective in the lesser morals of his life; his want

of general candour, of ingenuousness, and of that liberal trust in apparent virtue which had rather risk being deceived than run the hazard of suspecting unjustly. Faith in the gospel of Christ, where it is pure, lively, and unmixed with the sour leaven of bigot zeal, would have given him that beautiful simplicity of heart which adorns, instead of disgracing, the most illustrious abilities. It had been a happy exchange for lynx-eyed art and stoical incredulity.

Ah! dear Sir, I have neither health or spirits to extend my late volume against a second edition. I mourn a deep and irreparable loss. All the leisure I can command, all the energy I can stimulate in my grieved bosom, are scarcely sufficient for the discharge of my epistolary duties in a too extended correspondence. Your hints for investigating the principle of action in brutes, are highly ingenious, but the subject is of infinite difficulty, and to pursue it would require a much deeper knowledge of natural history than I possess, for that is small indeed. My observations on the theme in the Memoirs, were but the result of plain common sense. They only brought forward, and endeavoured to place in strong light, the circumstances which divide instinct and reason far more widely than Pope allows, when he calls that division

" But the fool's ignorance, and the pedant's pride."

I am by no means competent to enter the philosophic maze of the disquisition.

Then, as to collecting Dr Darwin's letters; that is, I believe, either done or doing, for Mr Billsborough's so much larger work; but I also believe that the Doctor threw all professional remarks into the Zoonomia which he thought important, as they arose in his mind, or as they had been given in his letters. Those of date subsequent to its publication, may contain new and interesting matter to medical philosophers; but I leave them to abler hands, and abide by the execution of my first, or, I should rather say, second design, as stated in my preface; since the first was a mere compliance with Dr R. Darwin's request. Beyond the insertion of a few short sentences against a second edition, if one should be called for, my sunk spirits recoil. My day of life is far spent;—the night is at hand, and composure of mind and repose of body are all I pant for now. I trace my propensity to alarming dizziness to the same cause which produced your headachs, and weakness of sight. It first seized me the day after I had by turns read and worked, with much effort and difficulty, in a stony road of twenty miles continuance. Since that time, if,

on the smoothest road, I attempt to do either, the disorder comes on. How strong must the corporal structure of Dr Darwin's brain have been which enabled him to write constantly in his chaise, from early life to his latest year! Even when sitting still I find intense thinking very prejudicial to my disorder of that region.

Adieu, dear Sir, be peaceful and painless longevity yours!

I remain, with affectionate and high esteem, your faithful and obliged humble servant.

LETTER XXV.

MRS CHILDERS, Dowager, late of Cantly Lodge, near Doncaster.

Lichfield, March 30, 1804.

I AM gratified that you found interest and amusement in my Memoirs of the deceased Dr Darwin; that you so warmly, and with such ingenious discrimination praise its contents; that they recalled your attention, ever susceptible, discerning, and animated, to the poetic glories of the Botanic Garden; that you met my claims for

their excellence with a coincidence of estimation which flatters me; and that you see with my eyes all the spots on that great luminary. You remark, however, shades of moral imperfection in the work, which are to me invisible, and which I must hope that you behold with the icteric vision of a too scrupulous delicacy.

I have confessed in my volume, that one single passage in the poem is somewhat too warmly coloured; but if on that account its so very charming and scientifically instructive pages must be interdicted to the youthful reader, Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, Shakespeare's, Rowe's, Lee's, and Otway's plays stand on the same line of cause for prohibition. That one exception made, I, who am familiar with every line in each part of that composition, declare I think its author has poeticized, if I may be allowed the word, the new and fortunate subject with a decency, a purity

> "Which would not thaw the consecrated snow
> On Dian's lap."

As I never, in his most gay and unconstrained moments, heard one immodest word, one indelicate equivoque proceed from the lips of Dr Darwin, so neither can I see any thing beyond the

chaste tenderness of connubial affection in the caresses of his floral ladies and their many husbands. The plurality is an order of nature, and nature's God, and surely nothing immoral can attach to its representation.

The poet occasionally mentions, that some of these vegetable nymphs and swains, "Clasp with fond arms, and mingle kisses sweet;" others, more pensive, are seen bending over the stream and mixing tender tears;—again, other bands of lovers, in chilled horizons, are screening their mistress from the damp air and stormy blast; while those of sultry regions are shewn fanning the unzoned beauty. These are not voluptuous endearments; all of them might pass unblamed between brothers and sisters.

Young women who could be endangered by such descriptions, must have a temperament so unfortunately combustible as to render it unsafe to trust them with the writings of our best poets, whenever love is the theme. Paradise Lost presents more highly-coloured scenes than any which pass in the floral harems; so does the Song of Solomon, in which the language and images are infinitely more luxurious than the muse of botany ever exhibits.

If to tell young women, who read on the consecrated leaves that glowing oriental poem, that it is

a pious allegory, be thought sufficient to extract all the dangers of the imagery, surely where the sentiments and pictures of the Botanic Garden are so much less highly-coloured, all possible hazard may be precluded, by observing more veritably to the youthful reader, that Dr Darwin's subject is a real operation of nature, and of nature's God, in the unaltering laws of his vegetable world, and that it is illustrated by those playful transformations.

You, my dear friend, make remarks in the course of your letter which entirely militate against your censure of apprehended licentiousness, and this when you observe, that "only human passions can excite human interest; that, of course, the mind must remain unmoved by the marriage of a truffle with a gnome; by the jealousy of fire on beholding the coquetry of azotic gas, or by the coral moss awakening his mistress to taste the sweets of the returning spring."

True, my friend, and such are the pictures of the Botanic Garden. They delight the fancy in minds where taste and fancy exist, but the passions can have no interest in them.

You plead my having declined the subject as improper for a female pen, when the Doctor, previous to his own attempt, urged me to take it, as a proof that I thought it exceptionable in any

hands; but I cannot admit the validity of such proof. That which it might not be strictly proper for a woman to write, may yet be not unfit for her perusal. As an instance; many subjects of medicine and surgery are eligible for male investigation which may be unfit for a female to commit to press, yet be fit and useful for her to read.

However, I confess there are books, both in verse and prose, whose tendency is seductive, and to which your censure on Darwin's poem exactly applies: viz. Ovid's writings in general; Dryden's beautiful and pathetic, but too glowing story of Guiscard and Sigismunda; Pope's Eloisa; Lady M. W. Montague's Poems, as inserted in Dodsley; Sotheby's Oberon; Rousseau's Julie; some of Marmontel's Tales,—a great number of the French novels, and, above all, the licentious novel by Lewis. These, and such as these, may, as was observed of Sedley's poetry,

> "Possess that soft, prevailing, gentle art,
> Which can with a resistless ease, impart
> The warmest wishes to the coldest heart."

But do not suppose that a virtuous girl, or young married woman, could be induced, by reading the Botanic Garden, to imitate the involuntary liber-

tinism of a fungus or a flower, who receives her seraglio of spouses, with the chaste affection of an amiable English wife to her own individual lord and master.

You speak of the unwearied delight with which you peruse Mrs Barbauld's Hymns for Children, and ask me if our tastes are congenial on the subject. I read them many years ago, but retain only a general idea of their touching simplicity, and perfect fitness to their design. If the care of children had been mine, I should not have rested satisfied without more intimacy with their beauties. I am told that Dr Aikin and this lady, his sister, are excellent in their private characters, as they are distinguished in their literary talents.

What a disgusting publication these five volumes of Lady M. W. Montagu's Letters!—Though generally shrewd, and sometimes witty, they have no grace of style, no enchantment of fancy. Sarcastic slander is their forte. On politics, on which they very seldom speak, the little they do say is more just than on any other theme, except that of impressing on the minds of parents the benefits of giving their daughters a taste for literature; yet if we were to trust their tasteless criticisms, nothing has been written worth reading. Libertine in principle, as licentious, by all accounts, she was in her conduct, Lady Mary W.

M. seems to have been dead, as an Egyptian mummy, to all the various genius and learning which sprung up and bloomed in England during the period of her existence. Looking back, with juster eyes than we look on the present epoch, it has long been the fashion to call, with truth, that period Augustan.

Her Ladyship provoked her once adoring friend, Pope, to abuse her unjustifiably, though perhaps not causelessly, and that by the neglect with which she received, and the contempt with which she spoke of his immortal poetry. Thus it is to envy what we ought to admire! The abuse she incurred from his pen was, however, less atrocious than his mean disavowal of it was despicable. But there is no wondering that he was irritated, and grew to hate the being he had once too fondly admired; since, in the zenith of his admiration, it reached his ear, that she had lyingly called him "the thing of sound without sense." Where was her own sense so to call the more than Horace of his time?

Lady Mary a lover of literature!—she!—who is a contemner of history and of travels! a blasphemer of the intuitive glories of Richardson's mind!—an universal "Smell-fungus!"

It was fit that she should so write of Richardson, on whose voluminous epistolary pages the

name of Shakespeare cannot once be found; for Richardson, insensible as she was to his powers, is the Shakespeare of prose. Lady Mary was never resident at Bologna, and judged of the character of its inhabitants by that of the natives of the other Italian cities; but Richardson had received better information. He had learned that, while a free commerce with France had introduced French manners into every other province, the Bolognese retained to that day, and still retain, the unbending pride, jealous dignity, solemn gravity, and bigot enthusiasm, which distinguishes them from the Genoese, the Neapolitans, the Florentines, the Venetians, and the Romans. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his lectures, observes, that this sombre cast of character and manners in Bologna, had affected the style of their very paintings.

Equally superficial, splenetic, and absurd, are her objections to the probability of Mr Grandison's reception in the Bologna family. So high an obligation as he had laid them under, by his endeavours to have preserved the morals, and by his having actually preserved the life of their darling son, might well induce them to dispense with the customary restraints of their country, and domesticate the visits of his deliverer in the palace of Porretto.

Lady M. W. M. pronounces Miss Howe and Lady G. unnatural and destestable, because human errors are mingled with solid good qualities; and says, in derision of some book she dislikes, that it is calculated to make Clarissas and Harriet Byrons of every girl that reads it. Then say I, whatever the book may be, let the press teem with it!—may editions be multiplied upon editions!—let universal circulation be its motto, as universal excellence must be the result of its perusal!

This female Poca-Curante* pronounces Johnson's Rambler a stale imitation of the Spectator. Nonsense!—she might as well have called the tragedy of Cato an imitation of Cibber's Provoked Husband.

In the year 1738 she writes, that "she has seen rhyme but no verses, during a great many past years;" years which shone in all the brightness of the famous poetic galaxy, Pope and Prior, Rowe, Gay, Thomson, Akenside, Armstrong, Addison, Tickell, Congreve, Dyer, Somerville, Parnel, and the sublime Young. She libels Pope's grotto, where so many of them, in turn, assembled, and

* See Voltaire's Candide. A splenetic gentleman of letters, who abuses every author, past and present, as insipid blockheads.—S.

calls it, in her pointless satire, the Court of Dulness, which she thus describes:

" Her palace, plac'd beneath a muddy road;
And such the influence of the dull abode,
The carrier's horse above can scarcely drag his load.
Here chose the goddess her belov'd retreat,
Which Phœbus tries in vain to penetrate;
Adorn'd within with shells of small expense,
Emblems of tinsel rhyme, and trifling sense.
Perpetual fogs inclose the sacred cave,
The neighbouring sinks their fragrant odours gave;
In contemplation here she pass'd her hours,
Closely attended by subservient powers."

These powers are profanation, obscenity, and folly; and their favourite votaries are Pope, and Swift, and their renowned coadjutors.

With what different ideas did I, in my youthful years, meditate the same scene, when the following sonnet on the subject was poured from my pen!

ON READING A DESCRIPTION OF POPE'S GARDENS AT TWICKENHAM.

Ah! might I range each hallow'd bower and glade
Museus cultur'd, many a raptur'd sigh
Would that dear local consciousness supply
Beneath his willow, in his grotto's shade,

Whose roof his hand with ores and shells inlaid!
How sweet to watch, with reverential eye,
Through the sparr'd arch, the streams he oft survey'd,
Thine, blue Thamesis, gently wandering by?
This is the poet's triumph, and it towers
O'er life's pale ills, his consciousness of powers
That lift his memory from oblivion's gloom;
Secure a train of these recording hours,
By his idea deck'd with tender bloom,
For spirits rightly touch'd, through ages yet to come.

These innocent and delightful enthusiasms are real blessings to the mind in which they spring. Yours, dear friend, is a soil where they are native. Adieu!

LETTER XXVI.

THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 21, 1804.

AH, yes! on the second of August last, the evening of my life suddenly darkened. Joy will illume it no more:—a dim chilled twilight all that remains. Some little you knew of the pleasing manners of that friend whose loss I mourn; but a single interview, in the year 1794, could not

unfold the virtues of his heart, or the variety of his fine talents.

But I quit the hopeless theme, and hasten to thank you for your recently published compilation, Nugæ Antiquæ*. It would be disingenuous not to confess that my mind has little of the genuine ardour of antiquarianism. That, which would not interest me as writing of the present day, has nothing valuable to me, except the disclosure of unknown facts, or that of new light thrown upon distinguished characters. Books gain with me no ideal value as to their thoughts, fancy, or style, by the repeated centennial wafture of the old despot's wing, or by the mountain of sand which had been heaped upon them from his hour-glass.

Yet, when Sir John Harrington is gay, we find him amusing. His characteristic touches, though strong, do not seem new to me. They must have met either my ear or eye in former years. Welcome, however, are those renewed impressions from the pen of so shrewd an observer, who had such near opportunities of remarking the strange contrarieties of character and manners in one of the greatest monarchs, though female, that ever

* Original Papers, in Prose and Verse, written in the sixteenth century.—*S.*

protected and nursed the weal of Great Britain; while she was, as surely, one of the most capricious and unamiable of vain women. The friend of her subjects' general freedom; the wayward tyrant over individuals, from the charming Queen she imprisoned and murdered, to the ministers whom she made responsible for executing orders which she would not allow them to dispute, when their consequences proved them ill-judged; and to the ladies of her court, whom she beguiled of their bosom secrets, and cajoled to betray and render unhappy.

Nor more new to me are the odious qualities here again presented, which polluted the despicable heart and conduct of our first James, styled, by the sacerdotal and layic writers of his day, the wisest and most estimable of princes. So proclaimed the right reverend the bishops.

Except in very few instances, in which praise of royalty has been deserved, how mean has ever been the adulation of the English to their reigning monarchs! How little was the real character of any one of them to have been gathered from their contemporary eulogists! There can be no doubt but the heart of James was polluted, or that he was also a fool and a pedant. Happily, however, for his country, he had, amidst all his folly, one point of wisdom in common with his Machiavelian

predecessor,—he hated war. Every hour more and more convinces me that love of war is the worst quality which can belong to a prince of Great Britain; the lust of wine and women is far less criminal in a king than the lust of blood.

Fine writers were certainly more scarce in the sixteenth century than in later times. Harrington had wit and humour, but his talents "were not soaring,"

"And, like the darting swallow, skimm'd the ground."

He had neither power to attain the glories of literature himself, or to perceive them in others. The Shakespearean sun, which, in successive effulgence, was blazing on the period during which he wrote, is not so much as named in his manuscripts! Then he often proses deplorably. I find it impossible to toil through his long elaborate Dissertation on Play, or through that about Elias; but his Episcopal Biography is very amusing.

Harrington seems as great an egotist as was poor Cowper, and as vain of his Ariosto as the other was of his Homer. Probably with about as much reason, if we may judge from the specimens of his poetry in the Nugæ Antiquæ. In the best of them, 2d Vol. l. 324., there is a verse

which reminds me so forcibly of one in Mason, as to make me suspect the great superior modern poet had cribbed it:

> " Whose eye but mocks the diamond's blaze"

says Harrington; and Mason, in the Ode to Truth, in Elfrida,

> " Shall she, whose brightest eye
> But emulates the diamond's blaze."

The last line of the next page in Harrington's verses, recals one in a favourite ballad a few years back. He says,

> " Or make a heart that's like our own;"

the modern,

> " Go seek a heart that's like your own,
> And come no more to me, Donald."

It was an answer to the sweeter ballad of

> " Thou'rt gone away from me, Mary,"

of which Cowper's admired ballad to his old Mary is a manifest imitation.

Of the rhymes from various pens in the second volume, I find the stamp of genius only on those entitled the Hospitable Oak, and I guess from your note, that it has been harmonized by a modern ear; and probably the best touches of imagery are modern also.

I marvel to find the learned Queen Elizabeth writing ungrammatically in her translation of Seneca,—thus, "The clear days follows the dark clouds;—from the roughest seas ensues the greatest calms."

> "Now, as for thee, thou soul of Sir John Cheek,
> That taughtest Cambridge and King Edward Greek,"

I am sorry for thy persecutions and distress, and can well believe them undeserved; but thy quaint couplet and triplet-featured prose in these pages, that so pleaseth Dr Kippis, pleaseth not me. And as for Sir Roger Ascham's letter to his wife, which you deem estimable, it is the most superfluous preachment I ever met. Against the natural grief of a mother for the death of her new-born infant, it wageth a long long war of unnatural words. The utmost dictate of good sense, on such an occasion, is but this: "We ought to submit, without repining, because it was the will of God to take our child from us;—perhaps in

mercy, foreseeing that its life would have cost us more sorrow than its death. This is the duty of religion; and wisdom dictates that it is fruitless to repine for that which cannot be recalled."

Pedantry and affectation only could dictate those verbose and tiresome metaphysics of religion and philosophy, with which Sir Roger's letter abounds. They were not likely to answer any other end, than to bewilder the brain of a tender mother, contemplating her blasted hopes. Either the arguments are nugatory, or they prove too much; since, if just, the moment an infant is born, its parents ought to wish for its speedy death, which this pragmatic asserter tells his wife, —" is being made vessels to increase heaven, which must be the greatest honour to man, the greatest joy to heaven, the greatest spite to the devil, the greatest sorrow to hell, that any man can imagine."

I once listened to an instance of untutored feeling, similar to that which this quiz of a consolation seeks to inspire. You have a large family, said I to the wife of a labourer. " Yes, Madam; but, God be thanked, we have buried a many childer, for all that we ha gotten such a ruck on 'em left. I often tells my husband,— belike God will be so koind to tak most of these

too, and rid our hands o' the care on 'em." I cannot say I admired the woman's untutored philosophy, any more than I do that of its prototype in the letter of Sir Roger.

You have formerly seen me acknowledging that, from the common-life variety of the subjects in Cowper's Task; from the familiarity of its style, frequently dignified by poetic strength; from its satire, which gratifies human malignance, and from its threats, which interest human fears, it must prove a much more popular work than the Botanic Garden; that it will be much more generally understood and felt. So will it be than Homer's Iliad. Is Cowper, therefore, a greater poet than Homer?—is he, therefore, a greater poet than Darwin?—Yes, about as much as he is a greater poet than Milton, to whom you prefer him.

Previous to the first germ of the Botanic Garden arising in the mind of its author, the ingenious and learned Dr Aikin had observed, in his dissertation on the subject, that the union of natural history and of modern philosophic science with poetry, was the desideratum in the fanes of the muses.

Darwin's great and splendid poem supplies this desideratum. In the train of Urania and her eight sisters, he has enlisted all the elementary

properties; the recently discovered arcana of vegetation; the leading points of astronomic science; the mechanic arts, from their first embryon existence, to their present maturity.

These are his materials, shaped by his luminous, glowing, and creative imagination, into countless, beautiful, and varied forms, floating onwards upon a full rich stream of melodious verse. How much injustice do you do to such a composition, when you call it the gaudy and transient tulip-bed of poesy, while you pronounce Cowper's verses a cluster of roses. Roses let them be, so these so much more splendid flowers of poetic fancy are deemed amaranths, unfading and co-existent, through successive ages, with all true taste for the higher orders of the delightful science.

Adieu. It is fortunate for us both that such voluminous scrolls as this are scarcely more than annual!

LETTER XXVII.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Lichfield, May 10, 1804.

I THANK you for your third volume of Cowper, which arrived the first of this month. Its contents perused with deliberate attention, still deeper impress my conviction, that far indeed from perfect was Cowper's character, his judgment, or his epistolary style;—that his character was sullied by want of charity to the failings of others, and by an unsocial exclusion of all except a few worshippers, whose attention himself and his writings wholly engrossed—his judgment perverted by jealous prejudice against the compositions of contemporary genius; his epistolary style, by a dearth of imagination and eloquence, inconceivable to me from the pen which gave us the Task.

Aware as you were how little I thought his style in letter-writing deserved the superiority you allot to it, it seems strange that in this supplementary volume you should boast of universal concurrence in that attested pre-eminence; and

add, that every intelligent reader must be sensible of its peculiar grace, ease, and harmony. So you sweep into the lumber of unintelligent readers that friend, to whose keen sensibility of the genuine emanations of genius of every species, and to whose ardour in prasing them your pen has borne frequent testimony.

It is a great mistake that your appreciation of these same letters is even general, much less universal; several of my literary friends have expressed opinions on their subject similar to mine.

I believe, however, that your echoers are numerous; all whose malignity the ungenerous and bitter satires of Cowper's pen have gratified; all whose religious terrors their presumptuous anathemas have alarmed; the swarms who, as Swift observes, "delight to hear each other damned;" —all whose self-partiality exults to see a style so nearly on a level with their own, exalted by the editorial fiat of a man of genius and learning above compositions to whose eloquence, wit, and grace they feel their own powers so hopelessly unequal; and all who think his truly estimable compassion for the suffering poor, his fondness for animals, and for five or six devoted admirers of himself and his writings, gave him a right to despise and abuse all the rest of the world; to level our schools and universities with bagnios

and brothels; to degrade the poetic literature of his country; to annihilate the high claims of Spencer, and those of the first poet the world has produced, our mighty Shakespeare, by asserting, as he does in the poem Table Talk, that poetry first rose in Britain with their successor Milton; that all before, and since he appeared, are but wandering lights, and, in comparison of Milton, but as stars and meteors to the sun.

Thus is this clamour of popularity almost exclusively in favour of Cowper, not rational; and irrational popularity always fades before the slowly-accumulating edicts of the impartially ingenious. Justly does he himself say, "One age blows bubbles and the next breaks them." The mania which has gone forth about him resembles that which once prevailed concerning Glover and his Leonidas; and, like that, it will melt away. Pass a few years, and Cowper also will find his level; be esteemed as a writer of genius, who has given one charming work to the world, though seldom, in any thing else he has written, rising above mediocrity.

Ah! yes, this will be so, in despite of all the pains you have taken "to buckram out his memory;" to put corks and bladders of indiscriminate praise under every thing he has written, to

bear him and his works down the deep stream of time; but they could only serve to support them on the shallow and soon exhausted currents of fashion, had not the Task an inherent buoyancy, which, perhaps with the exception of the comic John Gilpin, seems not to exist in any of his other compositions, and least of all, with some few interesting exceptions, in his generally insipid, vain, and self-engrossed letters.

Of their want of that value to the public which imagination, wit, discriminative criticism, or characteristic investigation, can only give to familiar letters, Cowper seems aware, when he says, "I would not write thus freely of me and mine to any but yourself." He little thought that these eternal sallies of egotism and self-importance would be exposed to the eyes of the whole nation.

Strange that Cowper should find blank-verse more difficult than serious rhyme. I can write blank-verse, with all its necessary variations of pause, and compose at least fifty lines in that style while I could write ten in rhyme, and yet my blank-verse be better of its sort than the best of my compositions in the heroic couplet. Strange also that your friend should so little know the comparative value of his poems, as to abjure that

order of verse in which he had produced one poem so infinitely superior to every thing he has written in the chiming measure. In that my ear finds his poetry stiff, hard, and inharmonious; while the numbers of the Task delight me. They bear no mark of effort; are free and vigorous, and sufficiently, though not uniformly, melodious.

Not only Cowper, but Milton, Thomson, Young, and the beautifully, but not servilely, Miltonic Crowe, have harsh lines, and sometimes even harsh passages in their blank-verse, which produce fine contrasting effect upon the just and manly ear, like the less perfect rhymes which, used in turn, vary and inspirit the luscious monotony of words which always completely chime. Akenside and Mason polished their blank-verse higher than any of the preceding four, yet are not therefore superior to them in general harmony. Cowper was right in saying that his blank-verse is not the blank-verse of Milton, since no styles can be more different, though your Hibernian friend found them similar. A good apple is a fine fruit, but it does not resemble the anana.

We find one of these same letters asserting that Pope was the only instance of a man of genius who took unwearied pains to correct and finish

his verse; yet in another we are told, that to touch and retouch is the secret of all good writing. This maxim is certainly true respecting poetry. Scarcely any degree of genius, or none below that of Shakespeare, can absolve from the duty. But with such maxim how inconsistent is the observation on Pope's patience in self-correction! Dr Johnson has no greater contradiction, though he sold paradoxes to the press by wholesale. In a succeeding letter Cowper says, concerning his first uncharitable volume of satires, in crampt rhyme, "I have touched and retouched these poems with the utmost care; I am never weary of the employment." He employed himself, in that instance, to poor purpose of polish and harmony.

Of this, as of the former collection of his letters, I can say with truth, that I think every well-educated person, of talents not above the common level, every day produces letters as well worth attention as most of Cowper's, especially as to diction.

My dear bard, you become a perfect Sangrado in literature, when you challenge pre-eminence for such insipid epistles. Water is a pure fluid, but it has not the strength of port-wine (Johnson's letters) nor the spirit and fine flavour of cham-

paign (Gray's). Good water is to be had almost everywhere, and good epistolary water without its having cost the gold of genius to procure it.

Why you should labour to persuade the world that the rectitude, talents, and judgment of that man were all surpassing, is to me incomprehensible, since in so doing you betray your own fair claims to poetic fame. This conclusion inevitably follows your premises. If Cowper was indeed free from all unworthy jealousy of rival reputation, and fully able to appreciate the value of poetic compositions, then his total silence respecting his friend Hayley's muse, proves that he did not think her worth attention, however he might love her votary. I, the rebel to Mr Hayley's Cowperian edicts, but the sincere admirer of much of his poetry, will never subscribe to his illimitable claims for the bard of Weston; but O! I grieve to see him dwindling himself into a dwarf bearing Cowper's armour, and looking up and wondering at the Colossus his stilts had made.

But my comments grow too extended for one letter. I shall beg Mr Monkton's indulgence for another frank to contain what more I have to say on the subject. When we wish to combat that hydra-headed monster, erroneous opinion, we should put on the whole armour of truth for

the contest; and besides it is not against such a man, and such a writer as Cowper, that we can with any modesty rest on the old distich—

> " I do not like thee Doctor Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell,
> But I don't like thee Doctor Fell."

Adieu.

LETTER XXVIII.

WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Lichfield, May 15, 1804.

I SEE why Collins, Gray, Mason, Hayley, Darwin, and the poetic miracle, Chatterton, overlooked, Cowper pronounces Churchill the only poet, himself excepted, since Pope's time. That he made the self-exception is certain, since none publish verses but who believe themselves poets. Churchill was " a good hater," (Johnson's avowed reason for loving some man, I forget who), and a bitter satirist, though without making, as Cowper does, religion the implement of his spleen. Churchill was an envious detractor from the lite-

rary reputation of others, and in Cowper's elegant language, " has given it them soundly." Churchill loved Lloyd, and a few more of his own worshippers. These congenialities procured him the exclusive favour of his, in those respects, kindred spirits, though Churchill's genius was, in reality, much inferior to that of Mason, and Gray, whom he ridiculed.

How durst your friend have the effrontery to say that the religion of the New Testament stood naked in the wilderness, unclothed by poetic hand, though conscious that the mighty and sublime spirit of Young had thrown around her the richest robes of poetic imagination?—but Cowper drew from the Night Thoughts, and therefore he never names them. I could point out parallel passages in the two writers, which render the plagiarism of the bard of Weston apparent, as in the following:

NIGHT FIFTH.—YOUNG.

" Life glides away, Lorenzo, like a brook,
Forever changing, unperceiv'd the change.
In the same brook none ever bath'd him twice;
To the same life none ever twice awoke.
We call the brook the same, the same we think
Our life, though much more rapid in its flow,
Nor mark the much irrevocably laps'd
And mingled with the sea!"

COMPARISON.—COWPER.

" The lapse of time and rivers is the same,
Both speed their journey with a restless stream;
The silent pace, with which they steal away,
No wealth can bribe, no prayers persuade to stay;
Alike irrevocable both when past,
And a wide ocean swallows both at last."

Cowper has described himself as a satirist, when, on page 180 in this third volume, he justly censures the denouncing preachers, thus: "There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ when he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted; he has given it them soundly, and if they do not tremble, and confess that God is in him of a truth, he gives them up as incorrigible, reprobate, and lost for ever. But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good

news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify a conduct which only proves that he does not understand his errand; the absurdity of it would strike him were he not self-deluded."

Self-condemnation never descended more palpably from any pen than from Cowper's in this passage, since the spirit of scornful denunciation everywhere prevails when Cowper reprehends the errors of mankind.

It appears from the frequency and length of his letters to his private friends, almost exclusively about himself and his verses, that the writing them, strolling about, composing and correcting his poetry, watching his tame hares, and cleaning his linnets' cages, employed all his time. Indeed he says that he never buys and seldom reads any new publications, and no mention is made of his being in any book-club. In this voluntary and nearly total ignorance of the literature which emerged from time to time through the years of his seclusion, we see him pronouncing in Table Talk, and in his letters, upon the imaginary dearth of poetic talent since Pope's time. He shuts his eyes on a bright day, and tells us it is midnight. Unjust, ungenerous, self-engrossed Cowper!

He might have seen extracts in the reviews, but it is not probable that he ever regularly read either Robertson's justly celebrated history of Scotland, or Gibbon's of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, though he condemns the style of both, and brands that of the latter with the odium of affectation. The excellence of Robertson's style was never before disputed. Gibbon's insinuated scepticism as to the truth of Christianity made him an host of foes, who have been long trying to revenge on the perfection of his language the imperfection of his faith; a common practice with mean and illiberal minds. Cowper's abilities left him without excuse for such injustice.

Gibbon's history is written with Ciceronian eloquence, in a rich, flowing, and inexhaustible vein. He must be an ill judge of language who does not perceive that of the historian of Rome is natural, and not strained; that through so long a work it could not have kept its free, untired, and brilliant course, if it had been the result of art and labour; that in him it must have been art and labour to have stooped his native oratory to the level of tame, inferior writers. Cowper, who seems to have had an aversion to eloquence, and with him the herd of owls, whose eyes ache at its lustre, might better like the dense and rayless me-

dium of style; but to be luminous was no effort to Gibbon, any more than it was to Dr Johnson: and it is well known with what rapidity his magnificent language flowed from his pen; that he often wrote a Rambler in company, and in less time than he could have copied it; and that he very seldom corrected the expression. In him, in Gibbon, and in Burke

> "The rich Homeric elocution flows,
> For all the muses modulate their prose*."

When the author of the above lines wrote them he knew what were the constituents of beautiful style; but beneath the infatuation which has induced him to assign pre-eminence of to me such milk and water reverse, I conclude him repentant of the palm his own charming muse has bestowed, and which I trust will flourish and endure through successive ages, on Mason as a poet, on Gibbon as an historian, contemptuously overlooked as is the first, and stigmatized for a literary coxcomb as is the other, by the pen of his present idolatry.

He has publickly styled the nervous and brilliant Gibbon, "the genuine Roman eagle;" and

* Hayley's Essay on History, Epist. 1.

now he robs him of that deserved and appropriate title, to bestow it on the Robin-Redbreast of Weston, whose bard, like that little bird, has sung sweetly; and, like it also, was an enemy to his own species, the poets.

You say in your Preface to this third volume, "It is pleasing to discover the sentiments which characters of high distinction entertain of other successful candidates for fame, who had lived in their days."—Yes, if such their sentiments be just and generous; but if they discover a narrow-souled hatred or unworthy contempt of such as excelled in arts "which caused themselves to rise," or by which they hope to rise, I know not any discovery more painful to an ingenuous and ardent votary of literature.

Admiring as I do, and ever did, the eloquent style of Johnson, (and I will add, too much to be able to admire Cowper's letters), I yet have never admitted his Lives of the Poets to a place on my book-shelves, since the specious injustice of those volumes is a caustic on my feelings whenever I open the leaves. Epicure as I am in eloquence, it makes me no recompense for malignant depreciation, blind prejudice, or misleading partiality.

I borrow your own language to express a maxim respecting historic biography which governed

my late publication, though you have recently told the world that it was right the biographic task should devolve upon some partially-attached relative or friend. In the notes to the Essay on History, Anna Comnena prefaces her filial biography thus: "Whoever engages in that province is bound to forget all sentiments of favour or aversion; often to adorn his enemies with the highest commendation when their actions are entitled to such reward; and often to censure his most intimate friends, when the failings of their life and manners require it. These are duties," &c.

Dr Lister bids me tell you that he is much flattered by your praise of his epitaph; and sends his best compliments.

After her long sterility, nature has burst at once into bloom. The first spring since my twelfth year, in which the countenance of intelligent and excellent Saville has not inspirited her charms. Wanting that, more welcome the gloom and the barrenness of winter!

Adieu! forgive my ingenuousness; and may you be happy here and hereafter!

LETTER XXIX.

MRS BLORE.

Lichfield, May 17, 1804.

I DO not wonder at your surprise not to have met, in my late volume on the character of Dr Darwin, a name which ought not to have been omitted in any record of Lichfield, during the many years in which he who bore it was one of its brightest ornaments; a name consecrated by native talents, by science of many species, by all the generous virtues and engaging graces. Be assured my free-agency was severely coerced in this omission. For his peace' sake, I was constrained to throw upon my pen the chain of this seeming pusillanimous silence.

Mr Saville always shrunk, with painful sensation, from every thing which was in any degree likely, out of the pale of his profession, to draw the public attention towards himself. Even in the zenith of his professional powers and exertions, he seemed more hurt than gratified, when he saw their praise in print. Modesty so invincible, without auxiliary motives, would have im-

plored, and perhaps irresistibly implored, my silence; but he knew that my pure and disinterested attachment to his unblemished worth, had subjected me to unworthy reflections, and, therefore, no arguments, no entreaties of mine, could have obtained his permission to present the just portrait of his talents and virtues to general scrutiny.

The Memoirs of Darwin were written when my mind had no consciousness how near it stood to the brink of its desolation. If it had fallen into the gulf before that work had been finished and deposited with the bookseller, it had never seen the light; but if its composition could have been subsequent to the loss I mourn, no dread of imputed partiality, or of renewed blame, could have withheld my fervent testimony to Saville's worth.

Devoted as he was to botanic studies, you are mistaken in supposing that he was a member of the Botanic Society which Dr Darwin attempted to establish here. He was solicited to be of it, but in vain, from the consciousness that compliance must have involved him in successive tasks for his pen. You know his aversion to using it, though he wrote with so much ease, perspicuity, and grace. He knew the Doctor was too busy, and Sir Brooke Boothby too dissipated

to undertake those translations from the Latin, of which their plan included the necessity; and he knew also that they would not have delegated that employment to Jackson, if they could have induced himself to undertake it. Therefore, as he used to say, "I kept myself out of the scrape."

Your warm approbation of my Darwinian volume is very grateful to me; and yet more grateful is your complaint of its desideratum on the subject of our mutual friend. Ah! if the omission had not been wholly involuntary, my conscience must have severely embittered your mild reproach. I have been gratified by warm testimonies in favour of my book from people of lettered eminence;—but, O! those eyes which would most have glowed over such testimonies, long ere they could arrive, were closed for ever!

I know not if the Memoirs have been reviewed. I never voluntarily look into anonymous strictures upon my publications. I see them committing too much injustice upon others to expect any justice from them to myself; and there is no pleasure in poking into incomprehensible objections, and malicious sneers.

LETTER XXX.

LEE PHILIPS, Esq. of Mayfield.

Lichfield, June 1, 1804.

IT gratifies me to hear you say that you will always cherish the memory of our lost Saville. He esteemed and loved you, I think, above all his many friends, his daughter, her children, and myself excepted; and well did you take the measure of his worth.

This blooming season, succeeding to the long sterility, but deepens the melancholy sense of my loss in his prized society. I was always fond of flowers; but, perfectly satisfied with the great variety of tints and odours which those of a common garden supply, I did not partake, but secretly deplored, as the misfortune they really were to him, his botanic knowledge, and thirst for so immense a possession of rare plants and flowers;—since their culture was difficult, troublesome, and expensive, engrossing a great deal of time which, his admirable talents considered, might have been better employed.

But over the charms of the rising and varying

year, our enthusiasms were in perfect unison. When we were together, scarcely a fine day of spring, summer, or autumn passed away, that did not witness our heart-thrilled exclamations of exhaustless wonder and grateful praise. We were never weary of applying these words to our sensations, to which no other words were so applicable:

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty;—thine this universal frame,
> So wond'rous fair!"

A spirit thus allied to mine in devotional, in scenic, in harmonic, and in poetic ardours, I shall never again meet on earth, at least with opportunity of frequent association. That consciousness saddens all creation with much more than wintry gloom. But let me not ungratefully forget how many years of youth, of ripened, and of fading life, were blessed by that friendship, which now the grave has swallowed up.

I am sorry that yourself and volunteer brethren are harassed by the unorganized projects of your commander. Many, deep, and, I fear, ruinous are the evils which military insanity has brought upon Great Britain. I was one of the few who foresaw them all through the past ten years; not by

any peculiar powers of discernment, for their result was written in characters broad and far less enigmatical than the warning inscription on the walls of Darius. Our national horizon has been gradually darkening since the year 1793. The day of peace dispersed it for a fleeting interval; but because the sun of prosperity did not shine upon it in all its former strength, pride, and the sense of imaginary dangers, induced us to fly for relief to the very means which had caused our degradation. Thus our present, I hope it may not be termed last state, is worse than our former, and the darkness is now of interminable prospect. No gleam of light separates the regathered clouds; and the dire steersman is again at the helm, to guide us, as heretofore, by existing circumstances, rather than by combining the experience of the past with the probabilities of the future; to form a system of politics, whose foundations might be laid in the safety, and continued existence of the monarchy, rather than in its false glory.

You were very obliging to take the trouble of transcribing for me the translation of the Latin Ode addressed to Camerarius*, and concerning

* Who first discovered the sexes of plants. This poem is in Blair's Botanical Essays, a rare book, published in 1720. —S.

which we have corresponded. The sexes of plants once discovered, coincidence may be fairly answerable for the idea of writing a poem upon the subject; and that idea is the only affinity between this mere skeleton, and Darwin's extended and complicated work, including actual metamorphose, not merely of plants and flowers, but of all the elementary properties, branching out into allusive ramifications of classic fable, history, ancient and modern, and of many of the remarkable events of more recent periods.

You cannot, surely, on reflection, suppose that he derived any assistance from this mere enumeration, in rhyme, of the sexual nature of vegetation, elucidated by two obvious, and by no means delicate similies from birds and fish. Darwin has acknowledged his sources in the interludes, that his system was Linnean, his plan Ovidian.

I cannot think with you, that the ingenious and interesting history of the Portland Vase, nor yet that of the Steam-Engine, misplaced. The elementary properties, his foundation, and their personification, his superstructure, digression to the uses made of those properties by human art ought not to be considered as impertinent, or (if I may be allowed to coin a word, which is lawfully compounded) illocal. It was a part of Darwin's plan, to adapt natural history and mechani-

cal science to poetry. Dr Aikin had, in a published work, pressed that design upon our bards, as a fair, a fruitful, and unbeaten field.

His counsel taken, has given that exhaustless variety to Darwin's great poetic work, which appears to me one of its chief excellencies. There, every species of reader may find gratification for his prevailing taste. You confess it when you observe, how many purchasers of the Botanic Garden you have known, who would never have purchased it for its poetry. Since it has no basis in regular story, its author was allowed an illimitable power of excursion, and hence the title of episode for any of its descriptions became precluded; yet I think the Portland Vase, and the Steam-Engine, cannot even be deemed excursive, since they grew out of his subject. The first, when the task allotted to the gnomes was to preside over the different strata of earths, and render them subservient to use and ornament;—the second, when his nymphs of fire were executing their similar commission. Dear Sir, why should we quarrel with our amusement and our instruction, because they are blended, and because their variety administered to the pecuniary interests of him who gave them? Lord Roscommon observes, in verse:

" Poets, the first instructors of mankind,
Brought all things to their native proper use."

Adieu! and believe me, &c.

LETTER XXXI.

MRS ———.

Buxton, July 17, 1804.

I AM shocked that your darling child, my little god-daughter, should have been exposed, on the 7th instant, to a tempest of so much violence, and that on the dreary and unsheltered vastness of the East-Moor. The buildings here had a narrow escape that day; since instantaneously, with one cannon-like explosion, a ball of fire, the size of a melon, passed over the old hall, and scathed a tree in the opposite garden, at about fifty yards distance. It fell before the company at the hotels had risen from dinner, which I had been constrained from attending by the commencing thunder. It was fortunate for my credit that it warned me to hide my fears in solitude, for I

am utterly unable to suppress the violent nervous agitation into which I am thrown by the flashing and the noise.

I had hoped that the extinction, which has gloomed my remaining life, would have rendered me superior to affright, under every circumstance which may seem to threaten its duration. That such a quiescent effect has not ensued to me beneath electric storms, proves that my trepidation from their influence is merely corporal, and out of the control of my mind. I hope little Annie caught no cold from the rain; received no impression of dismay so deep as to fix her a trembling coward through life, under every return of an exploding atmosphere.

Your letter is doubtless at Lichfield awaiting my return, since it has not followed me hither. Concerning "those long lists of accusation, those contemptuous expressions," which you say are contained in that to which it replies, I have no consciousness.

The very frivolous excuses which you made for having kept an old friend's book unread in your possession during several months, struck me with an indelible impression of incompatibility with affectionate regard for the writer, and with any respect for her talents.

I am an ingenuous creature; as I feel I speak, or I write; except to people whose slights are, either from their mental incapacity, or literary jealousy, beneath my notice. It is then, too, that I can scorn "the weakness of complaint," and avoid the "bitterness of reproach;" but where I have esteemed and loved, I cannot dress my language, either oral or scriptural, in cold civility, or feigned kindness.

If I had thought, as you do, that the suppression of resentment was an owed delicacy and duty of friendship, I must have retreated from our intimacy in gradual and cold alienation.

I am sorry that illness prevented your coming to Buxton. Yours is a life of great value, and it is one of your first, perhaps your very first duty, to attend to yourself in all things which respect your health.

We remove from hence to Matlock to-morrow seven-night, and purpose staying there a week. If you can, without the least hazard, come over to either place, while I am a sojourner there, I hope you will; and I thank you and Dr S. for your kind invitation to myself and Susan; but we are four of us, for my man and maid are with me; all your sons being at home, must make so large an addition to your already large family, very in-

convenient. It is not your kindly struggling to suppress the testimonies of that inconvenience which can prevent my sense of its inevitable existence. Therefore, and only therefore, is it that I cannot think of being your guest this summer.

Next week was, in the last fatal year, the final week of my dear lost friend's existence. Its Thursday, the dreadful anniversary when vanishes for ever the sole remaining, though but ideal, consolation of my deprived existence. O! it is yet something to be able to say to myself—This day twelvemonth Saville existed, in apparently renovated health, and with the sprightly glow of gratitude to Heaven, and of hope to continue some more years with the friends and children he so tenderly loved. At seven next Thursday evening, this latest comfort leaves me for ever. That dismal day, if I live to see it rise, I shall pass at Matlock, in solitude and woe. Few, in all probability, will be its annual returns to me; but few or more in number, silence and sorrow shall always consecrate its fatal hours.

LETTER XXXII.

MRS GRANVILLE of Calwich.

Matlock, Aug. 1, 1804.

MY dear Madam,—If you and Mr Granville will be at home from Monday, the 6th of next month, during the ensuing fortnight, I should have great satisfaction in passing a few days with you both.

Myself and cousin, Miss Seward, have passed a month at Buxton, and came hither from thence last night.

Whether or not we go back into Derbyshire next Monday, to pass a week with Mrs Stokes at Chesterfield, depends upon circumstances, concerning which I expect to obtain intelligence in the course of this week.

Ah, dear Madam, since last we met, marriage has temporarily deprived you of your lovely and amiable protegée Miss F. Port, and death has forever, in this world, deprived me of one of the best, kindest, and most disinterested friends that ever bore that too often unmeaning name; the only one remaining with whom I could almost daily recal

the years of youth, health, and hilarity, and, with a tender interest almost equal to my own, the ideal presence of the beloved and long-vanished individuals, whose society crowned those years with happiness. O! of how many dear and excellent friends have I lived to mourn the loss! Next Thursday is the dismal anniversary of the last departed. Strange countenances shall not look upon me that day.

This world, as you and the worthy partner of your destiny have agonizingly experienced*, is full of privation, till nothing of heart-felt joy remains to us but the hope of a better, in which mortal semblance shall glow with immortal *life*; remember and hold blissful converse with all it loved on earth, shall experience no evil, and shall dread no change. Adieu.

* Mr and Mrs Granville lost their only son, without ever having had any other child. He died a few years since in the prime of his youth, which was adorned by every gentle virtue.—*S.*

LETTER XXXIII.

Miss V——.

Matlock, Aug. 2, 1804, 2 o'clock.

My dear friend, the fatal, fatal day is come!—yet five hours of life, and health, and hope, remained in all the cunning flattery of nature, promising duration! I have been pouring forth the anguish of this day's sensations to her who sprung from him, whose extinction at evening, spread over the sun, to these eyes, the impervious veil of desolation. After short and interrupted slumbers, unblessed by any distinct idea of my soul's chosen friend, on that the anniversary of his last human sleep, I waked at day-dawn.—Alas! with what sensations, my dear friend's congenial imagination will but too faithfully conceive! It will truly tell her that I count the hours, the minutes, with all the woe, if not the horror, with which the condemned criminal enumerates them on the day of execution. This hour twelvemonth, how little did I think that, ere the evening closed, that voice, which was speaking to me in the sweetest and most sprightly tones, would be mute for ever in

this world!—those graceful features, beaming with intellect and affection, marked for ever, by dreary ghastly inanity, for the dark and narrow house. O miserable, miserable consciousness, how it frowns away peace and comfort from my heart! The sublime and curtained rocks, on which I this moment gaze, have echoed his harmonious voice in Dr Arne's beautiful hunting song—"With hounds and with horn I'll waken the day." That happy period was this time nineteen years, when he and I, with a party of eight from Lichfield and Derbyshire, made an excursion to this romantic scene, and its environs. With what spirit, what gaiety, did he pour that strain amid the echoing mountains! My impatient irrational soul yet, at moments, refuses to believe that never human ear shall listen to those tones again!

O! this swarm, not only of strangers, but of people to whom individually our attention is due! How that necessity corrodes the melancholy and aching heart!—but the seclusion of this dreaded day has been, and shall be inviolate;—only to those will I speak, who can understand the language of my woes—who will imagine it ere it rises to their eye on this paper. Ere long it may meet my dear friend's eyes, if I receive a letter that shall bid it seek her—and teach it whither to travel.

I sent you a long epistle yesterday, and hope it will reach you safely. It is near three!—my kind friend's thoughts, I know, travel with mine the dreary journey of this day's hours. Adieu! Adieu!—to silent and every minute augmenting anguish, be the remaining portion consigned!

Some few words added,—it is now near four! —and these eyes had looked their last!—but all unconsciously—to him or myself; for yet, yet he lived in health and hope! O could I have divined!—but it is a mercy that I did not; that my terror and anguish disturbed not his few departing moments!

It has struck eight—all was over!—and my last gleam of comfort from the reflection I mentioned to you, and on which my spirit clung, is passed away! Farewell till I hear from you again, my sweet friend, who would so fain console me, the forlorn of heart—but *that* fate forbids!

LETTER XXXIV.

CHARLES SIMPSON, ESQ.

Winterbourn, Gloucestershire, Sept. 19, 1804.

THRICE kind indeed are the contents of your letter, though it has given me great uneasiness on poor Miss F——'s account. Recollecting how fatal a fever, brought on by the same means, proved to her brother John, my fears on this subject are much awakened. She is one of the *few*. Native strength of understanding and play of fancy; wise and vigorous exertion in situations of teasing trial; sweetness of temper, rectitude of principle, a liberal spirit, and ingenuous goodness of heart, combined, early in life, to form her character. Intimately acquainted with her during a long series of years, I never, with much to esteem, met with the slightest circumstance to disapprove in her conduct or manners.

Upon the mind and conduct of men and women in every rank and station, I have habitually turned an observing eye; and it appears to me that men in general are governed by only two motives in their wedding engagements;—by the pur-

suit of beauty or wealth; though indolence, facility of access, and other accidental circumstances, form some exceptions, which puzzle conjecture in its search after their inducements. Thus some men find their affections entangled they know not how or why, neither by beauty nor wealth, nor yet those wiser considerations which might induce a man of talents to value the rational and companionable powers; the habits of exertion, prudently directed, and the cheerful sacrifice, on all occasions, of self-gratification to duties; to value such endowments above the possession of a weighty dower, or of all which gratifies, for a time, the fading pleasures of the eye.

Miss F—— had once beauty, but a cutaneous eruption on the face, though slight, soon tarnished and muddied her once radiant complexion. From that period, of fourteen years remoteness, she has lived without lovers, though her height and shape, as you know, are fine; her countenance expressive, and her features agreeable. Those who remember her beautiful, compare, to her disadvantage, the *has been* with the *is;* and men of her later acquaintance confess her agreeable, but her want of fortune ices their commendation. What has been will probably continue to be. I hope to Heaven she may recover, but I think she will not marry. Susan

Seward, with her fortune, merit, and accomplishments, is a bank-bill, and will soon pass off. To the society of Miss F—— I looked, as a sheet-anchor, should I live to want the attentions of a female, who might at once be my companion, my nurse, and my friend; so that great must I consider the loss to my self should disease blight her existence in the summer of her days. I long, yet dread to hear farther intelligence on this subject. No letter has reached me from Lichfield since your's followed me hither.

Not having had any return of the dreadful seizure in my head, which I sustained at Parkhall the 29th of last month, I left that pleasing scene, and social family, to fulfil my promise to Mr and Mrs Dowdeswell, and travelled on to Pull-Court upon the 6th of this month. Nature, and well-directed art, have combined to enrich and adorn that noble seat of an ancient family with every charm of landscape; excepting, indeed, the meandering course of a river, or the glassy expanse of a lake. Only a short reach of the Severn is discernible at about a mile's distance. What was originally a noble park has been, within these twenty years, and by its present owner, converted into a bright, extensive lawn, near a mile across, and of proportionate width. It remains evidently park-ground, though

a profusion of beautiful cattle supply the place of the banished deer, "the stately buck and sprightly-bounding does." A few venerable oaks and elms stretch their shadowing arms over this green expanse, at graceful distances, ere those swelling though not lofty hills of the interior arise and terminate the lawn, and under which the herd reposes. These hills are luxuriantly planted.

From the right side of the house a shrubbery of about a hundred yards conducts us to a small lawn, semicircled with shrubs and trees. It opens in front to a rich vale below; for the house stands upon a gentle eminence. The frequent and swelling knoll and tufted copse vary and divide the gay green meadows of this valley. The more distant country is bounded, at about seven miles distance, by the bold sublimity of the Malvern Mountains. Of different heights, their tops form an undulating outline, and melt into the clouds.

From this lesser lawn descends, darkling, a turfy forest-glade, in which three people may walk abreast. I never saw a noontide walk so pleasant, for it is kept constantly mowed, and is arched over by trees that exclude the sun. It winds through the forest behind the interior hills; which forest umbrageously zones the whole domain. You pursue this serpentine and velvet walk, ascending and descending in endless and un-

impeded train, to the extent of four miles, ere you find yourself again at the house. It opens on its progress into little green plats, in whose centre stands an oak or elm, with circular seats. One reach of this shady and long-winding glade spreads into an expanse much wider than the preceding ones. Here the scenery is exactly that part of Needwood where the vales of Sudbury and Ashbury burst upon the sight. A dark wood crescents more than half the lawn; and forest-banks, steep, wild, and abrupt, descend from the open side into a rich champaign of hills and vales; and of that landscape the Cheltenham Hills are the boundary, distant twelve miles, as are those of Malvern to the valley which the little lawn, on the other side the house, commands.

This more distant and more forest expanse has a rustic temple with seats. It stands in the centre of the umbrageous concave. There are also mossy seats under several of the trees, so that it forms one of the happiest scenes for a rural fete imaginable.

Pull-Court appears to me a place of superior beauty to Ragley or Lord Lyttleton's, and I wish it had a better name. Of late years the large old mansion has been modernized; and elegant furniture, a profusion of fine engravings, metzo-tints,

and drawings, with the odour of tuberoses and of other fine plants, breathing through the apartments, leave nothing wanting to the luxury of the senses; but luxuries of every kind are little to those who think they stand on the verge of life, and whose secret heart is desolated.

Little Mrs Dowdeswell, sensible and very lively, though twenty years younger than her excellent husband, loves him with animated tenderness, and alleviates the misfortune of long-extinguished sight by the most energetic and incessant attention. She reads to him, she writes for him; and, when he is unemployed, she frolics about him with all the sweet-tempered gaiety of Rosalind. His own industrious ingenuity assists her affectionate endeavours to make him forget his calamity. He knotted all the fringe of his furniture himself; he hung all his pictures and prints; knows, and can point out the beauties and defects of each. He placed with his own hands every book in his noble library, and can fetch any volume that is wanted without assistance. He repeats the whole Sunday evening liturgy to his family, with solemn and harmonious accuracy. I was affected even to tears when I saw him stand up, and begin that sacred address. His fine height, majestic person, expressive features, and unaffected energy of tone and emphasis, combined with the con-

sciousness of that darkness to which no earthly morning can come, thrilled my heart with blended sensations of pain and pleasure.

Pull-Court has no gentleman's seat nearer than about five or six miles. Mr Dowdeswell's mother and sister were there; and, excepting the Bishop of Ely and his lady, who called one morning, we saw no other company while I staid. It is the custom of the neighbourhood to make no dining-visits when the nights are moonless. I was glad to be excused the form of such intercourse with strangers. Mrs Dowdeswell senior is a sprightly well-informed woman of seventy-five, and very much the woman of fashion.

The kitchen gardens to this seat are very extensive. Mrs Dowdeswell takes great delight in her poultry; has the pied as well as common peacocks, and her aviaries, for she has one for large and one for small birds, are stored with all of curious plume, foreign and native. Mr Dowdeswell remembers you to your advantage, and desires his compliments.

You have sent me welcome news of the Palace concerning its approach to a habitable state, and I thank you extremely for your kind attention to it. Since you so pressingly renew your kind request that, on returning to Lichfield, I would repeat my visit to your pleasant and hospitable

mansion, and make it my head-quarters till the ecclesiastic roof may once more shelter me, I cannot resist the temptation; but, unless illness frightens me into an abrupt seeking of my long dear, though now, alas, to me changed city, it may be several weeks ere I again behold it.

From Mr Dowdeswell's I came to visit my relation by marriage, Mrs Martin, who, after having lived at Bath since she became a widow, some two years past purchased a habitation in this large and pleasant village, where she has several social neighbours in our rank of life. She lost one of the best of husbands and of men in the year 1795, by a sudden death. Apoplexy seized him, immediately after having made an eloquent speech in the county-hall at Nottingham, in favour of the necessitous poor that hard winter.

Mrs Martin's purchase here was of incredible cheapness. The house is very ancient, and somewhat dilapidated; has seen prouder days; once, I conclude, the residence of squiral opulence. It has three good apartments of more modern date, though of very awkward approach as to the lower one, a dining-room, thirty feet by eighteen, well proportioned and lofty, with white wainscoat, and three large sashes, into which the south-west sun shines cheerily. They look upon a little

lawn the width of the house in front. It has a shrubbery on each side, and is separated from her fields by a ha-ha. Two good sashed bed-chambers are over this dining-room. The rest of the mansion consists of two little parlours, at least two centuries date, Gothic and gloomy; old passages; an old laundry, and plenty of old hiding-places; a sort of rat-castle, we must confess;

> "Dim windows that exclude the light,
> And passages which lead to nothing."

To this venerable mansion a large and productive kitchen-garden, spacious farm-yard, coach-house and stable, a fish-pond, and twenty acres of rich land are annexed; and the whole cost her only nine hundred pounds. The little smart widow, moving in the fashionable circles at Bath, is become a notable farmeress, with all about her of old-fashioned comfort and frugal hospitality. This village is six miles from Bristol.

If I can escape a return of the dangerous paroxysm I endured at Park-hall, I shall pass my time as agreeably here as I could wish, at least as time can pass with me, but my head is not steady.

I prefer this sort of life to magnificent scenery and liveried boards covered with dainties. In-

deed there was no period of my life in which I did not make that humble preference. I might, if I had chosen it, have lived more with the rich and great than do my neighbours the ——s', but it was ever as little my taste to do so, as it was and is exclusively their ambition. Without parity of rank and of station, something to me always appears wanting to the perfect freedom and comfort of society on the part of the inferior. Even superior talents must be content to find themselves cast into the back-ground, respecting the attention of their high-stiled receivers, when people of rank are present. How then must it be with those of our middle class, when, without any powers above the common level of understanding, they are suffered in the circles of splendid life. More than suffered such folk never are, or ever can be. There, let them sit in the unenviable class of self-condemned automatons; the silent spectres of their departed freedom, with no other recompense but the silly boast of keeping, as it is called, the best company; as if genius, learning, and knowledge of human character, were not equally to be found in the middle as in the higher classes of society. It is to the circle where such powers of mind diffuse themselves, that the title of best company genuinely belongs. Such, dear Simpson, is your proper sphere;

where you can at once imbibe and augment the rays of intellectual intelligence.

Remember me kindly to cara sposa, and believe me always your ever obliged, &c.

LETTER XXXV.

Mrs Mary Powys.

Winterbourn, Oct. 18, 1804.

On my road hither, the 14th of last month, I dispatched a long letter to you from Newport. An apprehension haunts me that it may possibly be lost through the carelessness of the mail-coachman, who promised to put it into the post-office at Bristol; but I will not, till I know its fate, recapitulate the contents.

Pleased with the rural comforts and active exertions of my little friend, in her habitation of ancient days, I have passed my time much to my satisfaction. A potent spell, however, drew me from her during a fortnight of the elapsed five weeks.

I was surprised, on arriving here, to find myself only eighteen miles distant from my long-

valued and beloved Mr Whalley. When he last wrote to me I had not formed the design of proceeding so far into Gloucestershire, and his letter stated a design of going to Cheltenham early in this month, on account of his deeply-impaired health. For that reason I did not mean to inform him of my near approach. He heard of it, however, from a lady in this neighbourhood, and wrote immediately to press my hastening to his seat amongst the Mendip mountains; said he had resigned all idea of Cheltenham this year, and that he longed to introduce me to his lately-married lady.

I went thither on the 29th of September. Thirteen years ago I passed six weeks in that Alpine habitation. Increasing wealth and fine taste have since transformed and enlarged an elegant cottage on the brow of Mendip to an Italian villa, superbly furnished; extended every way his steep and lawny walks; and placed before his house, and to its whole length, a Tuscan veranda. It is the loveliest architectural luxury I ever traversed, peculiarly calculated for the almost dizzy elevation on which the mansion stands, and for the extreme of light which it chastises, and which was given by large sashes, the whole height of the apartments, from every one of which, on the second floor, we step out into the

gay veranda. Those consist of two drawing-rooms and a boudoir. The arches of the veranda are light iron-work, painted green. Its breadth allows three to walk abreast. The shelving roof is also painted green, the floor a mosaic sale-cloth; the circular seats at the end have each a large pier-glass, reflecting a part of the beautiful vale below; the coved-sides are fine painted glass. Twenty-four large china jars were filled with autumnal flowers, and one of them placed under every arch. All the sitting-rooms are on the second floor; servants apartments on the ground floor; but no culinary operations are carried on there. To this villa urbana there is a villa rustica, which is the cook's region. It is placed sixty steps lower, and hid amongst trees, a covered-way leading from it to the Arcadian palace above. That is seen from the vale below for two miles on the great western road from Bristol, and it looks as if it had dropt from the clouds; and indeed when we stand in the veranda, or look from the bed-room windows on the third floor, we seem suspended between earth and heaven, and inhale an atmosphere peculiarly sublimated.

The vale below is of twelve miles extent, ere the amber waves of the Bristol Channel divide

England from the Cambrian shores. Lesser hills, rich woods, lawns, and fields, a profusion of gentlemen's seats, with villages, "half hid in tufted trees," with their steeples or towers, vouch for the enjoyment of social pleasures, and for the national advantage of great population. There is a noble dining-room backwards, on the second storey, adorned by fine pictures; the glory of which is a full-length portrait of Mrs Siddons, by Hamilton. It is a speaking, a beautiful, an exquisite likeness, by which her charming face and figure, drawn in the prime of her life and beauty, should go down to posterity. She is in the character of Hill's Zara, at the moment in which she exclaims, with extended hands,

"Can it be Osmyn speaks—and speaks to Zara?"

but I have not time to proceed in my description of this grand saloon, nor of the result of that poetic imagination which formed the wood-wild walks, ascending and descending the sylvan steeps; or of the green terrace which zones the whole mountain to an extent of three quarters of a mile, commanding a perpetual change of the scenery beneath.

I staid at Mendip-Lodge ten days. Its new

mistress is gentle, kind, and good, and sensible, though reserved; three other ladies were of our party.

I gazed around, wherever I went, whatever I saw, with tearful, though admiring eyes, for O! to those charming scenes, dear lost Saville had been often invited by Mr Whalley;—always purposed going—and now!—alas! the consciousness that his eyes can never behold them, weighed about my heart and shrouded their beauties.

At Mrs Hannah More's, who lives in that valley, I passed one morning, and she was once at Mendip while I staid there. Her friend, the Countess of Waldgrave, came with her.

After a twelve-years estrangement from Sophia Weston that was, Mrs Pennington that is, Mr Whalley undertook to reconcile us, divided as we had been by an ingenuousness on my part, which I thought necessary to her welfare, but which her spirit was too high to brook. She lives at the Hot Wells, Bristol, and is a woman of admirable talents, and graceful manners. She received me with tears of returning love, and our reconcilement was perfect. She made me promise to stay with her a few days on my way back to Winterbourn.

Maria and Emmeline, of Edgeworths-Town, both settled in that city, sought me with much

kindness, and spoke with apparent delight of my attentions to them in their infancy, and of the hours they called happily spent beneath my father's roof. They have heard recently from poor Lovel. Alas! he is still in the clutches of the detestable tyrant, Buonaparte, and complains heavily of the unwholesome climate of Verdun. Mrs Beddows is like her mother, but neither she nor her sister, Mrs King, have any traces of their father. I thought them agreeable, but a few hours do not enable us to know if people talk from a reservoir or a spring. I inquired after them on arriving at Mrs Pennington's, but should not have sought them, uncertain of my reception, had they not sought me. The consciousness that they passed several years under the care of my soul's dear Honora, gave me an insuppressive interest in seeing, and in listning to them. They drew back the curtains of the past. I bend my homeward course to-morrow; but shall not reach Lichfield in less than ten days, having promised Mr Mitchel to resume his habitation as I go back. Adieu!

LETTER XXXVI.

WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

Lichfield, March 7, 1805.

DEAR Sir,—It is not easy for me to express how poignant my sense of the literary obligations with which you have honoured me. The Lay of the Last Minstrel valuably enhances those high-prized treasures.

My last letter to you, in August 1803, written while a competent share of health was mine, and while hope and peace were inmates of my bosom, was closed and sent away beneath the sudden death which tore from me health, and peace, and every earthly hope. Indispensable business pressing upon my attention, and claiming my exertion when my shocked soul needed rest, probably brought on, by degrees, the present excess of a malady to which I have been subject these many past years;—a dizziness of head, in more or less degree, always upon me, and which has, since the 25th of October last, increased with dangerous force, amounting to sudden paroxysms, in which all the surrounding objects seem falling

into chaos. These paroxysms are brought on by every attempt to stoop my head to read or write with any continuance. Thus am I obliged to employ an amanuensis for my letters, and to procure a friend to read to me audibly whatever I wish to peruse; nor can I sustain, without danger, a continued attention, and still less a chain of intense thinking. By this strange mysterious malady, which medicine has tried to combat in vain, the remnant of my days is destined to a gloomy suspension of every intellectual industry.

And now, to exchange this comfortless theme for one on which genius has poured his animating lustre—The Lay of the Last Minstrel.

The introduction is beautifully simple, and its last page is conceived with the utmost felicity of imagination. I am no less charmed with the sixth stanza of the first canto, though its excellence is of a different nature—a military exhibition, which distinctly pourtrays the preparation for feudal war. Its second and third couplet are sublime;—but if I proceed to remark every varied beauty of which I am susceptible in this fine work, my comments will prove scarcely less extensive than the work itself.

Yours and Burns' poetic journies transcend those of every other poet, by the concisely-descriptive mention of local objects, which make

the reader pass the ground with you progressively, so that were it his purpose to take the same road identically, he might find his way without any other guide.

The twenty-seventh stanza happily adverts to a darling song of my youth. Oh that you could hear sung as I have often heard,

"My sheep I've neglected, I've lost my sheep-hook;"

—but the lips that so sweetly and emphatically expressed the charming air, adapted by the late Dr Arne to those elegant words, are closed in eternal silence. Other voices may be as fine, the skill and fancy of other singers as distinguished; but for all the graces and powers of touching expression, nor man nor woman ever sung as Saville sung. I inclose an epitaph which I wrote for him a month after his instant vanishing for ever. It is engraven on an elegant monument in Lichfield cathedral, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley; the last tribute of my almost life-long friendship. All who knew Mr Saville acquit the marble of flattery. Let sorrow, however, no longer seduce me from my purposed theme.

The two closing stanzas of this canto vie in touching and picturesque beauty with the proem to the work.

I lately saw a review-criticism upon your exquisite moon-light picture of Melrose-Abbey, which so divinely opens the second canto.

The censure falls upon that architectural appropriation by which it is happily distinguished from every other description of every other ruined abbey. That circumstance attaches to it what appears to me a great excellence, viz. when the poetic muse in some degree conveys to us the elements of other sciences, by delineation of some of their appearances, powers, and effects; together with the use of their technical terms. Hence the rules of painting and the laws of heraldry, and of the mechanic arts, of natural history and of astronomy, are presented to the mind of the reader through the delightful medium of verse, and poetry is enabled to instruct while she charms. The Paradise Lost, and Darwin's Botanic Garden possess this excellence, for which one of the periodical censors blames your picture of Melrose Abbey. It must, however, be confessed, that it is not thus that a bard obtains the praise of reviewers, or, through their praise, acquires speedy popularity. Professional critics and common readers have but little appetite for compositions which abound in allusive knowledge. They turn from such poetry to that which merely amuses, or terrifies, or feeds the malig-

nance of human nature towards others, by satire or by religious denunciation; but it is not for these that genius consumes the midnight oil.

When I was at Bristol last summer, a lady said to me, "My son is of Merchant Taylor's school. He has there a friend and schoolfellow, not yet sixteen, who has been employed by one of the review editors to write strictures for his work, on your Memoirs of Dr Darwin." Such are often the presumptuous deciders on new publications.

The mention of that work tempts me to express my hope that yourself and Mr Mackenzie received the copy destined for each. To you, in literary interchange, that present

> "Is as the morn-dew on the myrtle leaf
> To your full streams."

You have disclosed the dead wizard with much sublimity; and lovely and exhilarating is the fresh, cool, morning landscape, which relieves the mind after the horrors of the spell-guarded tomb. And ah, how truly sweet and original is your description of Margaret; of the trembling speed with which she attires, descends, and speeds to the bower!

Will you forgive me if I confess, that your

dwarfology has less charm to me than the other rich creations of your fancy. A diminutive fiend cannot possess the terrible graces. I guess it was that consciousness which induced Shakespeare to change the primeval malignance of the fairy tribe for elegance and benignity, since all his art could not render the urchins terrific.

I am in love with the twenty-fourth stanza of the third canto, in its altered and exquisitely tuneful measures. Your Margaret is equally interesting in her pensive serenity, as in her trembling disorder.

The beacon-fires, whose sublimity is entirely your own, have no degeneracy in the succeeding stanza; and this simile in the next is original and happy:

> "And spears in wild disorder shook,
> Like reeds beside a frozen brook."

Nothing can excel the close of that canto in simple and concise pathos, nor the touching picture of the old bard, when, with pretended business, he tries to conceal his real anguish.

How well do you understand the art of contrast, and how judiciously is it exerted, when, in the exordium of the next canto, you change our mournful sympathy for the thrill of delight,—

" Sweet Tivipt," &c.; and what luxury of sound in this line,

" Along thy wild and willowed shore."

The next stanza is very fine; but I must abridge my comments, or I shall lose the opportunity of sending this packet by a private hand, to be franked in London.

Not unnoticed, however, must the song of the three minstrels pass away from my pen. I observe a great climax in poetic excellence in the two last from the first; purposed doubtless. Gærme's burden is pretty as to picture, but harsh of sound:

" For the sun shines fair on Carlisle wall."

The ear does not like three syllables together of equal accent, especially at the close of a line, and though the letter *l* is a liquid consonant, yet by its profusion, it becomes harsh in Car*lisle* wa*ll*.

Fitztravers' lay is sublime in the first degree; and exquisite is the tender sweetness of Harold's. What truth and nature in this picture!

" The blackening wave is edged with white
Tempt not the gloomy firth to-day."

The poem concludes admirably, and the notes are interesting and instructive.

You have bright poetic satellites around you, but Leyden is the brightest; his "Scenes of Infancy" abound in beautiful passages.

If there is room in the frank, without making it over-weight, I shall inclose the last verses I probably shall ever write, since I feel that my days will be few, and that Aonian inspiration, if ever it was mine, will return to me no more. With you may its spirit be permanent as it is bright!

Excuse this incorrect epistle, in a leash of characters, and believe me, with the highest esteem for your reported virtues, and admiration of your talents, dear Sir, your ever obliged and obedient servant.

LETTER XXXVII.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 17, 1805.

I WOULD not patiently hear your enemies (and who that is so enviable has not enemies) censure your Last Lay of the Minstrel with the same se-

verity that your own pen arraigns its structure. I confess no spot in that sun, except the air of insignificance which my ideas annex to dwarf demonism; and its introduction not being a voluntary affair*, the possible blemish melts into the general splendour of the orb, and the charmed reader discerns it no more.

Not only do I approve but admire the contrivance by which the minstrel is made the epic muse of this work. Hence the lofty story appears to every advantage, detached from the beautiful introduction, from the exordium and close of each canto, and from the conclusion. Imagination delights in the martial features, the sublime sentiments, the lovely landscapes, and the breathing pictures of the epic part; but the heart thrills and melts over the aged minstrel, and returns to him with renewed interest,—

"When pride is quell'd and love is free."

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* In a letter to the author of these volumes, Mr Scott observes—that "Lady Dalkeith, who has more of the angel in her person and mind than any one alive, heard the story of Gilpin Horner from an old gentleman, and she was so much diverted with his apparent belief of so grotesque a tale, that she insisted I should make it into a border ballad. If she had desired I should write a poem on a broomstick, I must have attempted it."—*S.*

Surely nothing can be more natural than his reciting the songs of his departed brethren. What reader that feels poetry, could endure to spare them? Deliciously musical is the burden of the first song, when it has the pronunciation of your ancient Scotch.

"The sun shines fair on Carlie wa';"

Instead of

"The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall."

I should have been strongly tempted to have given it in the old dress—especially as it was the eldest strain, and the bard might have been excused for his partiality to the time-honoured language.

No, I never saw Lady Dalkeith; but the spell of such an enchantress as you describe her to be was of course resistless; and if it had commanded you to make Caliban the supernatural agent of your poem, so it must have been.

Your tinker * simile for the anonymous critics

* "The hired critics, not understanding what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Many of them appear to me a sort of tinkers, who, not knowing how to make pots and pans themselves, set up for menders of them, and often make two holes in endeavouring to patch up one."—*Mr Scott.*

pleases me much. They seem indeed to have no ideas in common with the genuine poet. They may be useful in directing the course of the darting swallows of the poetic science, but not to prescribe the track of its eagles.

I congratulate you upon the acquisition of a new satellite * to supply the place of that which, for a time at least, has shot from your sphere †.

Extremely must I desire to read a poem which you profess to admire, and I thank you for the kind wish of procuring me that pleasure; but if you will give me a direction where it may be procured, I will send for it myself.

Dr Leyden's sweet verse has inspired me with affection for its author, and I thank you for all you say on his subject.

Mr Hayley has sent me his last publication, The Triumphs of Music. Ah! I could well have excused the present, since I cannot flatter, and am sorry to mortify. The poem is longer than The Triumphs of Temper, but it is a dull Bristol-stone compared to that bright diamond.

This strange composition is a chaos of ludicrous absurdities, on which scarce one ray of genius gleams.

* Mr Grahame, author of a poem entitled The Sabbath, mentioned with delight by Mr Scott.—*S.*

† Dr Leyden.—*S.*

The versification is hard and jirking; the epithets generally unappropriate, and inconsistent with each other; the metaphors ridiculous—witness one taken from the toes to illustrate kissing:

> " Intoxicated friendship made a trip,
> He touch'd, in blind temerity, her lip."

From this mass an apparition of a mother, and no mother, two purses, an old maiden aunt, and a parrot at prayers, pop up their heads, challenging reverence, admiration, and applause. Possibly this quiz of a poem may obtain sale and circulation amongst the methodists, on account of its eternal hymns and praying sonnets, which, like the tenets of that insane sect, caricature the fair face of genuine religion.

LETTER XXXVIII.

REV. R. FELLOWES.

Lichfield, May 22, 1805.

I TRUST you have imputed my long silence to its true cause, the continuance of my strange and dizzy malady, which, during so many months, has made writing difficult and perilous. Ably and kindly do you, on its subject, philosophize the tendency of long-continued intellectual exertion, to weaken the fibres of the brain:

> ——————" Nature's threads,
> Fine, passing thought, e'en in her coarsest works,
> Delight in agitation, yet sustain
> The force that agitates them, not unimpair'd;
> But worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
> Of their best tone their dissolution owe."

It sooths me that you regret the not having sought my personal society, while only a distance of thirty miles divided us. Procrastination steals away, from time to time, our interesting purposes; till, and perhaps suddenly, unforeseen events occur, which render them unattainable, and

leave the future to reproach the past. A deep reproach for the weakness of long delay, where least I meant omission, do the years irrevocably fled make to my remaining life. I suffered circumstances, which I might have overruled, to suspend one of the dearest plans of my heart, till it sunk in the grave of friendship; a local devotion which once had been paid with ineffable delight, cannot now be paid but with agony.

The physiognomy of the dead.—You think it likely to have connection with the moral qualities of the deceased. I cannot believe so. Without any such idea, I have often, in solemn curiosity, inquired of those who had the care of the lifeless remains of my friends and acquaintance, concerning the nature and progress of external appearance, and its dread changes on such their remains. By medical gentlemen, I have always heard them imputed solely to material causes. Since your last letter arrived, I have conversed with an intelligent army-surgeon on the subject. He assured me that stern tranquillity is invariably the character of every human countenance, so soon as the body becomes cold and stiff, whether the departed had died quietly or in distortion, in hope or in terror,—that all traces of the passions first sink in relaxation; nor do they, he said, return, when the features, as soon they do, become rigid.

He added—" I have often, a few hours after a battle, surveyed the field of the slain, and found the same vacant, dispassionate, ghastly calmness on every face. Be assured it remains indiscriminately on the countenance of the dead, till beginning putrefaction changes and distorts it."

The period at which that terrible change takes place, varies extremely, as well, you know, depending upon the nature of the previous disease, and upon the weather.

Those horrid lineaments, the mere result of dissolution, would be most unfair criterions by which to regulate our opinion of the virtues or vices of the separated spirit; or even if that opinion was balanced, to weigh a single grain towards its preponderance. Some beautiful lines of our young poet, Southey, may, I think, be applied to this theme:

" Not to the grave, not to the grave, my soul
Descend to contemplate the form beloved!
The spirit is not there
That kindled that dead eye;
That in that motionless hand
Has met thy friendly grasp!
It is but lifeless, perishable flesh
That moulders in the dust,
Air, earth, and water's ministrant particles
Now to their elements
Resolved, their uses done.

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my soul,
Follow thy friend belov'd!"

The whole of this rhymeless ode is equally solemn, just, and impressive. Probably you have seen it.

I have received two poetic presents lately, from authors of renown, inspiring sensations of much contrast; Mr Scott's epic poem in six cantos, The Last Lay of the Minstrel, abounding in every species of fanciful beauty—and Mr Hayley's epic oddity, The Triumph of Music. Over the last we may too justly exclaim,

"Oh heavy lightness, serious vanity!
Mis-shapen chaos of strange seeming forms!"

It is, in dismal verity, the profoundest bathos imaginable, of a genius which, during a considerable period, had soared as it sung; but its downward flight has been gradual, and commenced several years ago. This last production would disgrace the veriest poetaster existing. For Mr Hayley, however, let us not forget the past in the present; the richness of his summer harvest, while we survey the stubble, tares, and thistles of his winter fields.

LETTER XXXIX.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, June 13, 1805.

With a trembling hand, my beloved Miss Ponsonby, do I take up the pen to thank you for a thrice kind letter. It had not remained several weeks unacknowledged, but for this terrible malady of the head, which has oppressed me with so much severity during the interim. I think it must soon lay me low. Not at my time of life does the constitution, pushed from its equipoise by long enduring disease, regain it amid the struggles.

Immediately on receiving your last, I sent for Madoc; by far the most captivating work of its genuinely inspired author. Unable to read myself, Miss Susan Seward gave its poetic wonders to my charmed ear, in her just and pleasing, though not very varied recitation. Soon after we had gone through it, she left me, and my friend, Miss Fern, became my guest. She reads verse with dramatic eloquence, and the most harmonious cadence. Insatiate with a single hearing,

though so recently gratified, I requested her to pour again upon my eager attention, its heart-felt interests and graces. Yet more than by the first impression was I delighted.

Madoc eminently possesses the vital and prime excellencies of poetry, the power of awakening solicitous and eager interest; of steeping the eyes in tears of transport, and of sympathy; of giving to imagery and landscape distinctness, appropriation, strength, and originality. For their dear sakes the feeling heart, and the exact taste, pardon, though they cannot overlook the systematic outrages of the style, occurring so frequently. I wish its author had spared the most interesting of his Azticans, that child of filial piety and mercy, his beautiful Coatel, to bless her Lyncoya, the improved Friday of the work.

Curious is the affinity between the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary and that of the Indian God; which circumstance the notes affirm to be an historic assertion. Curious also, on the same alleged authority, the similarity of the Indian enterprize to the Land of Souls, and that of the descent of Orpheus. Erillyat is one of the noblest heroines of history or fable. I admire and applaud the care the poet takes that his cantos should open and close with lines of the most striking effect or bewitchin grace.

Our young friend Cary has published his translation of Dante's Inferno. It is thought the best which has appeared, and the sale goes on well. He presents a copy to yourself and Lady Eleanor, and I trust you will receive it soon.

The Inferno is a great storehouse of poetic images, but almost all of them have come down to us in Spencer, Milton, and other poets, so that the chief amusement this volume gives me is from my tracing the plagiarisms which have been made from it by more interesting and pleasing bards than Dante; since there is little for the heart, or even for the curiosity as to story, in this poem. Then the plan is most clumsily arranged: Virgil, and three talking quadrupeds, the guides; —an odd association.

The poet, being his own hero, involves, by necessity, an unpleasing quantity of egotism, while the perpetual question and answer, so long continued, proves very wearying with its endless "said I," and "said he." Then such a succession of torments for poor frail mortals! such broiling, gashing, freezing, and whirling!! Terror, terror, nothing but terror, and to no possible use, since its description obtains no faith by which to repel temptation and purify morals. I trust Cary has done justice to his original, since in his numbers the poetry is often grand.

What a triumph for the muses, and for the rising century, that one year has produced the best translation extant of a classic so renowned, and two such original epic poems, as the Lay of the Last Minstrel, and the Madoc! How do their unborrowed charms reproach the envious and narrow-minded asserters that the well-spring of genuine poetry is exhausted! Such detractors always did and always will exist. Owls love to make a noon-day darkness.

What strange times are these! The king and family are expected very shortly in this town. It is possible they may chance to look at these episcopal apartments of mine, and its gardens. I cannot appear before them ill as I am, and unable to stand still even half a minute, though I can walk without much difficulty in the recesses of my disorder. This is the fourth king of England who visits our city. Its three preceding royal guests were not fortunate. Richard the Second slept in Lichfield on his road from Ireland, not long before his deposition; Charles the First in a late period of his unfortunate wars, when he was driven from Leicester; and James the Second, a short time ere he shot from his royal sphere. No one, however, will dare to whisper to our present monarch, that a Lichfield sojourn may be ominous.

Present me devoutly to your beloved Lady Eleanor. Most interesting is your description of that visit, mutually paid to the desolate and silent Dilbren. How worthy of yourselves that hour of consecration, with all its tributary sighs! Too happy were the days and weeks which I passed beneath its roof, and in its beautiful and sublime environs, to permit such revisitation from me.

It would break my heart amid its present consciousness, spread over with a dark and impervious pall, which can never never be drawn away.

Dear, and amiable Miss Ponsonby, farewell.

LETTER XL.

Rev. H. F. Cary.

Lichfield, Aug. 8, 1805.

My contemplation of your recent literary party has been very pleasant. Seldom is it that six people meet, who all know to feel and to appreciate the powers of poetic genius; meet in such a dear embowered seclusion, uninvaded by less-privileged spirits; with the treasures of Madoc

for your banquet, new to four of you!—but that charming work rises on our admiration by repeated perusal. I have heard it four times read aloud, and listened with delight, which "grew by what it fed upon."

Perhaps familiarity with the higher orders of verse may be necessary to the adequate perception and appreciation of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, though assuredly one of the most exquisite effusions of poetic fancy that graces our language; but Madoc bears a master-key to every bosom where but common good sense, and any thing resembling a human heart, inhabit; while the dropping lights of imagination, viz. picture and landscape, meet us on almost every page; landscape, fresh and vivid, from exhaustless and inexhaustible nature.

The difference between the Last Lay, &c. and Madoc appears to be that which subsists between the Tempest, the Midsummer Night's Dream, and Cymbeline, and Othello. Only the thorough lovers of poetry taste the two first—all taste and feel the two second.

Joan of Arc is a noble epic, but Madoc transcends it greatly, and all its interests are British. Madoc has more for the understanding and the heart than any composition without the pale of Shakespeare and Richardson. Its heroes are not indebted to impossible feats and hyperbolic ex-

aggeration for the grandeur of their characters. This poem was born for the full refutation of the Bishop of Worcester's dogmas concerning the indispensability of supernatural machinery to epic excellence.

We are all much amused by the ridiculous misquotation in the Gentleman's Magazine in its review of your Dante, where they make you confess that the poet you have translated, is, instead of one of the most *obscure*, one of the most *obscene* writers; while the literati will instantly perceive the mistake, it is likely to procure the circulation of your work amongst a certain and numerous class of beings, those gross voluptuaries, to whom chaste poesy is a dead letter.

O! we have had such an up-hill business in toiling through two volumes and a half of Todd's Spencer, with its voluminous annotations. I never liked that poet, but now, by intimacy, like him worse than ever. To me there is little genius in the fabrication of such hobgoblin tales. I am wholly at a loss to guess what has procured for Spencer the high place he holds amongst our classics.

I once thought that there was a prejudice against Spencer in my mind, and that not having endured to do more than dip into his poems, too little of him was known to me to judge him fair-

ly; but now am I self-acquitted for scorning to turn from the statues of Apollo and Antinous to pore over the blocks of a barber's shop, with a few primroses, violets, and cowslips stuck about their bald pates. So here is a three-months blister upon my patience, and a four-guineas obligation upon my gratitude!

You, dear Cary are, I think, an admirer of Spencer, and will deem this epistle heretical. Adieu!

LETTER XLI.

Miss Ponsonby.

Lichfield, Oct. 31, 1805.

Nothing, my dear Madam, is so common as hypocrisy and treachery where property is concerned; but a greater excess of them never poured their dark currents from the vulgar heart, than in those circumstances which your last letter narrates.

Thus ever be extortionate villany baffled—and long unclouded be the peace which succeeds to that attempted injury! I cannot express how

much I am obliged that you took the kind trouble of retracing the road of peril, which had so nearly engulfed a scene, whose beauties rise perpetually in my sleeping and waking dreams.

How sorry am I to condole with you on the commenced accomplishment of my assured prophecy concerning the fate of this new coalition against France! I was deeply aware of the delusive nature of those hopes by which it was stimulated. I felt assured that the inferior Germanic powers would take the stronger side; that Buonaparte was too great a general to wait the junction of the Russian and Austrian armies, ere he began his attack upon the latter; but that insolence, by which the emperor of Germany forced Bavaria to unite with the French, exceeded even those fears for his common-sense, which his rash acceptance of English subsidies had excited. Surely he had received sufficient proofs of their impotence to render him victorious! Equally outstripping my fears, proves the triumphant welcome which the son-in-law of our king gave to Napoleon, added to the 8000 soldiers by which he augments the overwhelming armies of that emperor. I was convinced that Prussia would not desert him, because it is not her interest to do so. She looks to him for aggrandizement, springing

out of the defeat of her old and natural rival, the emperor of Germany.

A strange broken reed, on which public opinion, at least with the ministerial people, has lately leaned, was, that France, disgusted with her illusory hopes of liberty and equality, would also lose her prompt obedience and daring exertions, now that the trumpet of war sounds beneath the imperial banner. Ah! why was it not more rationally felt, that the pride of extended empire would amply supply the place of republican ardour, as an incitement to follow and support their everywhere triumphant leader!

Peace will soon be restored to the Continent, by the utter defeat of the present coalition; but if no repeated experience can convince this country of the fatal mischiefs of her belligerent principles, they will soon bring on the loss of Ireland, and the rapidly succeeding downfal of British independence.

The stimulant idea, which ministers have excited amongst the people, that Buonaparte is bent upon the destruction of England, appears to me a dangerous illusion. Our rulers, probably, know it to be such; and if their dread is sincere, I am afraid it will prove another instance of the truth of the adage which says, "Fear is a bad counsellor."

I feel assured that the French emperor is only bent upon obtaining a share in the commerce of the East and West Indies; and that we ought to fulfil the treaty of Amiens, by resigning our exclusive pretension to Malta. Concessions in those respects would, I am convinced, satisfy him; and better, surely, that we should share with France our colonial possessions, than that we become a vassal to that empire. I see no alternative, I can hear none suggested, even by the loudest clamourers for continued war. The day-spring of security will never break upon us through the sanguinary clouds raised by the breath of ministerial infatuation.

Oct. 31.

So far of my letter was written five days ago; my tyrannous disease has not, in the interim, allowed me to employ my pen, and it will, I fear, oblige me to lay it down, after a few minutes exercise, and more days may elapse ere I can finish this epistle.

And now our newspapers assert, that there has been great exaggeration in the French account of their victory over the Austrians. They speak also with absolute confidence concerning the long unlikely junction of Prussia with the enemies of France. If that confidence should not prove de-

lusive, it will surprise me much. Even in that case, my wishes will greatly prevail over my hopes, for a different issue of this to that of the former coalition; and the drain upon our national wealth, now more lavish than ever, the misery which accumulated taxes must bring to all the merely competent part of this people, the floodgates of death and anguish lifted up, without any prospect of being once more put down,—altogether produce a sum of evil, in this bottomless contest, far greater than was likely to have resulted from the treaty of Amiens.

I am now listening, for the first time, to Lord Orford's brilliant and interesting letters. Till now they never fell in my way, and I was too indignant of his cruel neglect of Chatterton sedulously to seek them. With all their infinity of wit and spirit; with all their polished ease and gay fastidiousness, I perceive in the mind of their writer, a native want of attention to works of poetic fancy. This defect of temperament, co-operating with many testimonies of a warm and kind heart towards his friends, soften my censure of that unfeeling neglect which blasted, in its morning, a genius pre-eminent, so that I almost consider it as an involuntary fault. To be sure I have, from my youth up till now, thought it impossible that a man of Horace Walpole's abilities could see with-

out perceiving the magnitude of that genius, which planned the deception respecting poetic antiquity. Alas! blind to the sublimity of the poems, he saw only the deception. His mind could but dart with the swallow over poetic regions, not soar with the eagle, or trace him in his sun-track.

This is right strange; so strange, one scarcely knows how to conceive a distinction thus total between the species of invention which belongs to first-rate wit, and that which constitutes imaginative genius. In Gray's letters we see those different powers combined, but imagination is the master-tint in them. Its orient hues have no existence amid Horace Walpole's sparkling coruscations. Hence he set little value,—he looked not at them in others. Yet, be it confessed, that I am judging of him, in this respect, by a sample; for I have proceeded scarcely a quarter through these epistolary disclosures of his inmost heart; its virtues, its frailties, its taste, and its apathies.

It is shocking to send you such an unsightly scroll; but if you were to see how strangely I am obliged to place my paper, suspended on the left elbow of an high arm-chair, in which I may lean back and have my head supported! If I stoop my head in the least degree forward, dreadful dizziness instantly ensues.

Nov. 2.

And now our newspapers cease to assert the Austrian defeat immomentous, or the co-operation of Prussia certain. O! the never-ending quicksands on which Mr Pitt places the confidence of the nation! Its unwearied credulity proves the possibility of a whole people becoming insane, as well as an individual. Once! and all Europe was as one madman, when it thought it a sacred duty to assist the Almighty in banishing the Turks from Palestine.

Adieu, dearest Madam! Your beloved Lady Eleanor will accept my affectionate devoirs!

LETTER XLII.

Rev. R. Fellowes.

Lichfield, Nov. 27, 1805.

It has pained me that I could not sooner thank you for your Treatise on Death,—a theme of the utmost and solemnest interest.

This little volume has the luminous ability of your former compositions; but you will be vili-

fied by the hierarchy, and by a vast majority of your readers, for disavowing belief in the supposed eternity of hell torments; and by that disavowal, asserting the justice of your Creator. The general zeal with which eternal punishment for the wicked is maintained, by those who call themselves Christians, is too deeply rooted in human malignance to be disrooted by the powers of reason, or the principles of justice. Good God!—as if it were not sufficiently deterring from the practice of vice, that every unrepented sin will be punished to the full measure of those miseries of which it has been the cause to others, whether by the mischiefs of ill example, or by the deprivation of comfort! If, as is reconcilable to the divine attribute of justice, that should be the nature of expiatory suffering for the wicked, to what dreadful length of woes, in the state of final retribution, have the rulers of the earth to look forward, who, either through national pride, national jealousy, or the vague and coward apprehension of remote and uncertain evils, have set nation against nation, and sacrificed millions of lives in the fields of murder, and inflicted all that mighty mass of anguish descending upon the relatives of the victims?

I have seldom felt the sensation of dissent in

perusing the treatise before me; but I cannot think the observation, commencing with the last line of the eighth page, exactly, at least not invariably true. I cannot suppose that, where health and competence are possessed, together with a taste for the various charms of nature, and of the fine arts; where the undersanding is capable of distilling the sweets of the philosophic, historic, and poetic springs; where envy is not; and where human kindness is, that satiety can steal upon the soul, though, through the lacerations of its affections, anguish may.

After the meridian of his life had long been passed, my father often said, that he had never experienced ennui, or more than a few hours privation of actual and conscious happiness. From my own knowledge of his character, habits, and manners, I am sure the attestation was sincere. So can I attest for myself, on the subject of satiety.

Nothing but ill health, poverty, or the death of those I loved, could have induced me to think this world much less than Edenic; and infelicity from those sources is not satiety. If I have been wearied by the ostentatious vanities of life, retreating from them, my mind returned, with increased elasticity and revived delight, to the ra-

tional pleasures. I do not think, and I am sure I never felt, that they contained the seeds of lassitude or disgust.

Most entirely, however, do I agree with you, that individual immortality, though crowned with exhaustless wealth, and undecaying youth, would, amidst the general system of gradual decrepitude and death, prove a source of anguish more bitter than man, in his present limited state of existence, can know. Godwin's admirable novel, St Leon, is a convincing illustration of this your paragraph on the ninth page.

Your remark * on the consequence of immortality, or even much extended life, being allotted to the whole human race is just; but does it not militate against the doctrine, that mortality was not the original destiny of mankind, but the punishment of sin?

* Mr Fellowes observes, "that if the supposed increased durability of life were the common privilege of all men, it is evident that the earth must soon teem with an accumulated population; and that either the young must be destroyed to leave room for the old, or the old to leave room for the young." It is equally evident that, if mankind had not been born to die, a sphere of a thousand times the extent of the earth, could not have contained all who have been born since Adam's time. How much less, then, could the little Garden of Eden!—*S.*

Sublimely does your third part open, and it contains an able and most satisfactory commentary on the text,—" In my Father's house are many mansions ;"—and admirably do you demonstrate, that from such inequality in the degree of heavenly bliss, according to the degree of earthly virtue, no envy, no embittering sensation, on the part of the inferiorly portioned, is likely to flow.

Your suggestion on the 104th page, respecting premature death, that it may be in mercy dealt to prevent the accumulation of crimes, seems to me not entirely reconcilable to God's justice ; for, if it be the tender mercy of foreknowledge, why is it partially extended ?—why are any permitted to live, who, it is known, will abuse the gift of life to their own misery, and that of others ? Again, when, in the same paragraph, you observe, that the period of probation to the wicked is often extended till every hope of their reformation is extinguished, how do you reconcile such hope in the breast of the Deity, with his foreknowledge ? No being, human or divine, can hope for that which they know will never come to pass.

Religious disquisition has no brighter gem of eloquence than the paragraph which begins on the 127th page, on to its close. Like exquisite music, sweetest is it in its close. Nor does the lovely

foreground of the picture exclude the possibility of seeing, in perspective, my heart-dear prospect of the sometime resurrection of the body.

I long to peruse your poetic effusions, but I shall never be able to investigate the two large octavos which you announce for publication. Reading to myself brings on dizziness in a few minutes. My friendly readers are all young, and long religious tracts weary them. I have an invincible repugnance to purchasing gratification for myself at the price of another's punishment.

Even for myself, I seem to have already perused, in your former works, all that was sufficient to fix my faith, and guide my practice.

Oh, Sir, have you not lamented the madness and cruelty of the new coalition? It is terminating, as it was always to be foreseen it would terminate; while to repair its mischiefs, our fleet has again triumphed, and the gallant Nelson bled and died in vain. Adieu.

LETTER XLIII.

To ———.

Lichfield, Jan. 27, 1806.

At last

> " The extravagant and erring spirit hath hied
> To his dark confine,"

covered with the lavished blood of slaughtered millions, and answerable for the anguish of millions surviving to mourn the slain *.

— — — — —

Dr Parr, the wise and eloquent, called upon me after we had dined, on Tuesday last, staid an hour, and afterwards joined our party at Mr Muckleston's for the remainder of the evening. He was accompanied by his intelligent fellow-traveller, Mr Green. Dr Parr's articulation, always thick and hurried, is now, by the loss of his teeth, become almost wholly unintelligible to my time-dulled ear. The intense attention with which

* Alluding to the death of Mr Pitt.

I bent my head to listen while he talked, and the fumes of his pipe of tobacco, proved so injurious to my disorder, that the next day I had three slight paroxysms of my alarming dizziness; just such as you saw brought on at your house, when Miss ——'s tide of loquacity about nothing, deluged our quadrille table.

Our friend, the Doctor, has a habit of striking his clenched hand on the table while he declaims, which contributes to drown his confluent utterance. He talks of coming to me on his return from Manchester. Ah! if I was in health, what pleasure should I have in receiving him!—but in my present state of malady, should he stay many days, I shall be the martyr of my anxiety to hear him, and of an atmosphere so injurious to my perilous disorder. Indeed, dear friend, I am in a state to which the utmost quiet is necessary, and I am now trying to repair the mischiefs of that evening by a large blister on my head; that evening, in which I sat like Tantalus in the river, trying to catch the stream of oratory which perpetually eluded my efforts.

By what I could imperfectly gather in his first call, Dr Parr thinks that the ever most improbable success of the late baffled coalition, if by miracle it had succeeded, would have been eventually more unfortunate to Europe than its failure

will prove; and *that*, from the power it would have given Russia to accomplish the ambitious plans of its late politic and ruthless Catherine, the subjugation of the Turkish empire, and, consequently, that of Poland, Hungary, Prussia, and Germany, with the command of the Black Sea, and of the commerce which such command would involve; that these achievements, following in train, must have poured such hordes of military and savage barbarians over the civilized parts of the Continent, as would again have spread upon it the night of the Gothic mantle, bringing back the ravages of Alaric and Zengis, and all that destruction of letters and the arts, which would characterize a second Vandalism.

Your letter has symptoms of a speedy return home; but I know not how to trust them, remembering how your Lady loves to linger beneath her native bowers, even when, as now they are, cold and leafless, so long as glowing hearths, and the attractions of consanguinity deride their desolation; remembering also your heart's proneness to oblige her.

LETTER XLIV.

Miss Fern.

Lichfield, Feb. 7, 1806.

After a seven weeks stay with me, Mrs Martin and her daughters are preparing to quit my roof for Mr Hinckley's, and I trust you will hasten to resume your friendly influence over my many wants, and few solitary hours. My health and my heart have need of you. We will often resume Lord Orford's letters, and bask in the sunshine of their spirit.

Often have I seen strange contrarieties in the human soul; never any which surprised me more than in that of our sometime Horace Walpole. His delightful letters have not only amused me infinitely, but filled me with contrition for the long injustice which I had done to his heart, instigated by my indignation over his conduct to poor Chatterton, which excited so much general reprobation, and which certainly deprived the world of his glorious talents.

I am now convinced that Lord Orford was no more answerable for that disastrous event, than is

the man who, by a random and inconsiderate shot, deprives an illustrious stranger of life; and for the following reason: Lord Orford was an extraordinary instance of the possibility of possessing the most brilliant wit and genuine humour, extensive knowledge of history, and of the belles-lettres, with a certain degree of poetic genius, elegant though not eminent; all this without the least perception of the pathetic, or the sublime excellencies, either in prose or verse.

This strange limitation of talents so considerable, this scarcely conceivable defect in the organization of his sensibilities, this miraculous separation of warmth of heart, of cordial sympathizing friendship, from any sympathy with imaginary sorrows, however consonant to truth, nature, and real life! Ah! what a phenomenon in character do they present.

At first view, it may seem scarcely less strange when I declare, that these contradictions, these defects in the feelings; this abortion in the talents of Lord Orford, unfolding themselves in his epistles, have taught me to love and delight in the man whom I had so long detested for his apparently unfeeling conduct towards the ill-starred Chatterton; convinced as I was, that it must have proceeded from cold pride and induration of heart.

On inspecting the recesses of his bosom, disclosed in these fascinating letters, I find that I might as justly have condemned a blind man for not distinguishing colours, as the sometime Horace Walpole for not perceiving that the manifest deception, offered to his consideration, as poetic relicts of antiquity, was replete with the noblest effusions of a creative and sublime genius that ever glowed in the fancy of opening youth; that, compared with Milton's compositions at the same early age, their immense transcendancy is apparent, and that Chatterton stood unparalleled, not only by him, but by any child of sixteen that was ever born for the glory of human intellect; that, with every cultivation which learning could bestow, no rose of the Pierian garden ever equalled this amaranth of the desert.

Alas! it was not for the man, whose strangely tempered perceptions could feel none of the varied and matchless excellencies of the Clarissa and Grandison; and who could despise the most splendid metaphysic poem in any language (Akenside's Pleasures of Imagination) to discern the grandeur of Chatterton's muse. Her assumed antiquity was an evident, though most pardonable fraud. Lord Orford was disgusted by the fraud, while, to his narrow ideas of poetic excellence,

the result appeared to be modern fustian in the robe of ancientry.

As to the admiration, frequently expressed in these letters, of Homer and Virgil, Pindar, Shakespeare, and Milton, that was the poetic religion of his Lordship's classic education. If Homer, Virgil, Pindar, Milton, and the tragic parts of Shakespeare's plays, had been first introduced to him in ripened life, and as recent compositions, I dare be sure they would have appeared heavy, tiresome, and bombastic. But for his early personal affection for Gray, so had he deemed of his inspirations. As it was, cold and scanty is the praise allotted to him in the letters of this celebrated commoner, and at length peer of the realm.

Though Akenside stands not an equal height with those pre-eminent bards, yet is his place of great elevation; and he who was not aware that it was elevated, was not likely to discern the radiance of the new Georgium Sidus in the poetic hemisphere.

Then Richardson, whose prose has all the painting, the imagery, the dramatic spirit, and the pathetic powers of the best poetry; what but pity remains for an ingenious man, who has pronounced the grand works of such a writer vapid and dull!

If I was shewn compositions which I thought turgid as well as deceptive, and believed them the fabrication of an hack writer, I should advise him, as Lord Orford did, to renounce the muses and mind his engrossing. Wonder, therefore, at defective taste, rather than condemnation for supposed cruelty, is all we have a right to feel on that unhappy theme.

Of unworthy pride, which I had imputed to Lord O. as adjunct to hardness of heart, his letters also acquit him. The solicitous attention and time which he bestowed upon that incorrigibly imprudent and unstable draughtsman, Bentley, is acquittance positive on that head. So also his indulgent and constant friendship for Mrs Clive, of comic memory, even after he became conscious that she drank, and could be provoked to swear like a trooper. Thus this brilliant mortal, whom I thought so haughty and heartless, comes out, as to benevolence, pure gold from this epistolary ordeal, and I cordially remit to his affections the gross defects of his taste.

Thus, during a little gleam of exemptive health, I have been induced to throw on paper, for your consideration, some of those reflections which my ever busy mind has recently revolved. If I could think less frequently, or more superficially, it would probably be better for my impaired con-

stitution. In youth, the energetic employment of the intellectual faculties strengthens and improves them, without injuring the bodily ones; but mental, as well as corporal repose, is the necessary cradle of advanced life. My disorder produces much actual drowsiness; that is in itself disorder. When I am awake, I cannot persuade my spirit to feed on the opiate themes of common-life occurrences. Adieu! We shall soon, I trust, converse instead of corresponding, which is a much less pressure upon the fibres of the brain; it is then that we skirmish away with the rising ideas, even on abstract subjects, without intense investigation.

LETTER XLV.

Miss Catherine Mallet of Brianson Street, London.

April 14, 1806.

You wrote to me, dear friend, in the last vernal winter, and I answer you in a grey and iron spring. Prophetic were your fears for the then

slumbering tyrant of the year; he has indeed awakened to rigour and usurpation,

> ——— "And in this month of showers,
> Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
> Makes devils' yell, with worse than wintry song."

You ask me what I say to the despotic and arbitrary kingmaker, and his insolent assumptions? This I say, that it appears to me, and to most of my friends, whose opinions are the result of unbiassed reflection, that he has been more assisted and goaded on to the attainment of empire, so nearly universal, by the impotent rage and improbable schemes of our late ministry, than even by his own grasping and indefatigable ambition. Britain would not suffer him to repose upon his laurels; she could not allow Russia, and Austria, and the German princes, to let him rest, though repeated experience had shewn her, that to rouse him again to a new struggle on the continent, was but to lead him to fresh victories, and more extended dominion.

Buonaparte sought not the last contest; he did but resist the assailants of his former acquisitions, and they and their instigators must take the fatal consequence. Unless he ceased at once to be the

great general and able politician, that consequence was certain.

After having combated and subdued the foes of that country which had chosen him to be its ruler, he became master of their territories, and controller of their power. Where is the monarch who, having acquired them by conquest, would not have retained them? Let Russia, Austria, and Prussia, who parcelled out Poland and massacred her inhabitants in cold blood, answer that question. Let Britain, whom Cowper, in his Task, thus solemnly interrogates,

> "Is India free, and does she wear her plum'd
> And jewel'd turban with the smile of peace?
> Or do we grind her still?"

Yes, let her who endeavoured to enslave her colonies, who, when France chose to change her form of government, and to follow the example of England in beheading her monarch, hurled the torch of discord over Europe, when she might have extended the olive branch, let her also answer the appeal to her consciousness. They must be strangely ignorant of human nature who do not know that there are a thousand would-be Cæsars for one Cincinnatus,—for one Washington.

You ask me "what Lord Orford, who was so tired of sterling kings and princes, would have said to these new-plated kings and queens?"—The reply is obvious, that he would have laughed at, and ridiculed those whose absurd plans enabled Buonaparte, like the rulers of ancient Rome, to make and unmake kings at his pleasure. Lord Orford cast too observant and equal an eye upon the human race not to know that almost every man whom the folly of others has invested with a degree of power fatal to the subjugated, will retain that power, and use it at his pleasure.

Alas! my friend, why is there so much erroneous judgment amongst even wise and good people?—Why? but because we so seldom put ourselves in the place of those whose conduct we arraign; because we have one rule for our enemies, another for ourselves.

Some good might possibly arise from endeavouring to conciliate a victorious foe; but it is evident that nothing but mischief can result from abusing him. It is more magnanimous as well as more politic, to govern ourselves by the axiom of one of the philosophers. "So conduct yourself towards your enemy, as that he may one day become your friend." As to Mr Pitt, there is a short, simple, and infallible test of the virtue or vice of his administration. Lord Bacon has given

it when he says, "A minister who has long possessed absolute power must be pronounced good or bad by a comparison of the state and situation of the country when he came to the helm, and when he left it."

We made peace with America in 1783. The unjust and foolish warfare, whose injustice and whose folly Mr Pitt had so eloquently anathematized in the senate, had left us with a vast and startling debt; but we had no dread of any rival power. Secure on the lap of restoring peace, and with our alliance courted by all the surrounding nations, Mr Pitt found us when we resigned ourselves to his protection; and with our revived commerce, flourishing more and more beneath the shade of the olive. Perceiving, as he must, the blessings that peace was regaining for us, he early panted to exchange them for the curses of war, in a quarrel with Spain about a barren and useless territory. He was happily unsuccessful in that sanguinary attempt. Would to God he had been so also in the second!—After obstinately persevering in unsuccessful warfare through fourteen years, he dies, and leaves us with the national debt trebled, every port in Europe shut against us, our internal trade perishing by bankruptcies, owing to that arrested intercourse, and the consequent impossibility of being paid by

those European cities to which our merchants had sent their goods; our taxes more than trebled; our shores menaced with invasion; our opportunities of making a safe peace all gone by!—and how stands Mr Pitt's administration the test of the philosopher? The tree is known by its fruits. Strange that any one should mistake the apples of the manchineal for the bread tree!

He has died too late. The wiser part of the present ministry are in the situation of skilful physicians, called to a patient whose disease has been rendered mortal by a desperate empiric.

Remember me to Mr Mallet, and to all who form his domestic circle. You are now the serene sun of that little sphere. Ah! shall I ever again bask in its rays? I wish to Heaven you would say *yes* to that apprehensive question, and soon make my house your diurnally rising and setting horizon.

Health, and the ring of Fortunatus, would ensure to me the pleasure of frequent conversations with you, but as I possess neither, my sole resource is this cold, white vehicle, for the conveyance of our mutual sentiments. Adieu!

LETTER XLVI.

Rev. Robert Fellowes.

Lichfield, May 31, 1806.

Thank you, dear Sir, for your obliging letter, and for the candid manner in which you receive the requested criticisms on your poetic volume. Far be from me all pretence to infallibility concerning what I may believe essential to the power and elegance of the Parnassian science; and surely you and I would not, on farther examination, be found to differ so widely as you seem to suppose we do. Your dislike to a pompous diction, where the ideas are not proportionably elevated, cannot be stronger than mine. You add the word *artificial* to pompous. If by that word you mean finically laboured, I agree with you; but if you apply it in its literal sense, viz. a diction carefully polished by attention to elegance and harmony,—if that is to be condemned, the learned have been in a long error respecting the blank-verse of Milton, and the rhyme of Pope, Prior, Gray, and Mason. Those authors brought all

the skill and all the labour of art to the aid of genius, and the result was perfection.

The style of Madoc is plainer, and uses words and phrases not conversational, but somewhat vulgar as well as obsolete; such as *quoth he, belike, beautifullest, worser,* &c. My literary friends objected to them vehemently.

At first they displeased me much, but the style is, in most other respects, so melodious, has so much nervous and dignified simplicity, always rising into magnificence where the elevation of the ideas demands it;—the interests of the story do so seize and impress the feeling heart; the characters are drawn with so much strength and subtle discrimination; the imagery is so bold and impressive; the landscapes so vivid, original, and true to nature, that the old-fashioned inelegance of some of the phraseology soon ceased to disgust me. Nay, I know not whether, like a few freckles on a fair and lovely face, I do not think it heightens the general charm of the diction; but neither *quoth he's, belikes,* nor freckles, are in themselves desirable things.

Your letter excited a most agreeable expectation, not as yet fulfilled, a visit from the author of that immortal work. I should see and hear him with the same sort of feelings with which Chaucer met and conversed with Petrarch; or,

in a juster comparison between myself and such a guest, with sensations similar to those which Milton allots to Adam in his conference with the angel Raphael.

Mr Wordsworth has undoubtedly genius, and charming passages are to be found in his verse; but on the whole, it is not first rate; often meanly familiar, and almost as often turgid and obscure; therefore I cannot think his judgment and decisions should be implicitly received. He is right in observing, that the use of common life simple language in verse, is frequently a beauty, but not right in extending that use to all modes of phraseology within the limits of the immodest, the disgusting, and the ungrammatic. A thousand instances might be brought where neither decency or grammar are violated, and yet where a low and ludicrous effect is produced in verse by habits of expression which even polite conversation might not refuse to tolerate; such lines as the following in a funeral elegy on the death of a young nobleman.

> "Heaven would no longer trust its pledge, but thus
> Recall'd it, rapt its Ganymede from us.
> Was there no milder way than the small-pox,
> The very essence of Pandora's box?"

These lines are not less ridiculous and contemptible for being Dryden's—or these

" The distant heard by fame her pious deeds *,
And laid her up for their extremest needs.
Sure she had guests sometimes to entertain;
Guests in disguise, of her great master's train;
Her lord himself might come, for ought we know,
Since in a servant's form he liv'd below."

Amidst all the prevailing excellence of Dryden's verse, the mischiefs of mean diction are lavishly apparent; and in Shakespeare sometimes—Hamlet to his father's ghost;

" Art thou there, true penny?
Well said old mole, canst work i' th' ground so fast."

And again:

" Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain's top."

In the last instance how vile a prologue are the candles to one of the finest images that poetry has produced:

" Nor Heaven peep thro' the blanket of the dark
To cry hold, hold, hold!

Mr Hayley's once inventive, classical, and elegant muse, has of late appeared deplorably infect-

* Elegy, Eleonora.—*S.*

ed by Wordsworth's system concerning the propriety of using all sort of familiar terms in serious verse within the sphere of his proviso;

See the result:

> " In a quick billet to Venusa sent
> He spoke with kindness of their kind intent,
> But begg'd henceforth their praises they wou'd spare,
> Since thanks and praise are things he cannot bear."

And,

> " Oft his alert benevolence supplied
> Aid that his fortune seem'd to have denied,
> Nor yet betray thee to thy hasty sire."—

And,

> " The old magnifico more dull than pert,
> Engag'd her notice only to divert;
> Since weak and corpulent, and apt to doze;
> Sometimes he slumber'd in her music's close;"

and this is the prevailing style of Mr Hayley's Triumphs of Music. Neither the instances from that work, from Dryden, nor from Shakespeare, contain one word that in itself presents a disgusting or even indelicate idea; none that would disgrace polite conversation; yet surely Mr Wordsworth would not deny that their poetic use make very contemptible poetry. What then becomes of his dogma? He should have remembered, ere

he gave it to the world, that if there is a Doric simplicity to be used, there is also a Doric delicacy to be preserved in every sort of metrical composition, excepting the avowedly ludicrous.

You will remember, that for light and gay verse I recommended Prior's style as the safest and happiest model; which I should not have done had my taste refused to tolerate the elegant use of common-life phraseology.

Mr Wordsworth's rule is vague, indiscriminate, and dangerous as a guide to the poetic student. If the composition be light and trivial, so much the more does it require a polished elegance in the manner of giving it; not that high-sounding language which suits great and serious ideas, but the lighter graces. Prejudice and envy betrayed Dr Johnson into a great mass of false criticism, and defects of vision into utter insensibility to the charms of landscape, the enjoyments of rural life, and the poetry which they inspired; but when neither the defects of his mind or body operated to mislead his judgment, it is always to be reverenced, and generally to be trusted. If I am not mistaken, his Rambler has an admirable paper on the subject in question. I will examine. —I have found it, and shall transcribe some of the sentences which early and indelibly impressed

my youthful memory, though I was not, five minutes ago, certain from what source I received the conviction.

"When the subject has no intrinsic dignity it must owe its attractions to artificial embellishment, and may catch at all the advantages which the art of writing can supply. He that, like Pliny, sends his friend a portion for his daughter, will, without Pliny's eloquence, find means of securing gratitude and acceptance; but he that has no present to make but a garland, a ribbon, or some petty curiosity, must endeavour to recommend it by his manner of bestowing the trifle. Trifles always require exuberance of ornament; the building which has no strength can be valued only for the grace of its decoration. The pebble must be polished with care which hopes to be valued as a diamond, and words ought to be of select elegance when they are to supply the place of things." Vol. V. No. 152. This paper is very able throughout. It is, I see, on the construction of familiar letters, and opposes the trite and false maxim, that they should invariably preserve what is called an easy conversational manner. Johnson more justly maintains, that as no subject, decent and moral, ought to be precluded from our familiar letters to our friends, so their style

should rise or fall with the nature of that subject; elegantly playful, or seriously eloquent, as suits it best.

You continue to speak of the inflated style of modern poetry—and surely with demonstrable injustice, since we have no right to take its character from those ephemeral versifiers, which, in every age, and every country, have proved the insufficience of their claim to be styled poets. Never, since Shakespeare's time to the present hour, did England want a number of metrical writers, fully competent to give honour and credit to the national poetry; to preserve from all just condemnation its general character. Neither has Scotland wanted them, from the period of Allan Ramsay and Thomson. Ireland, with a few exceptions, was ever, and still remains, a barren soil for the Parnassian fruits.

It is well for your patience that my silences are of involuntary length, since my pen is so ungovernably excursive. I always intend to confine myself to a single half-sheet; but thought rises upon thought, and baffles a resolve, which was prudent respecting my health, provident of my own time, and merciful towards yours. So much for free agency. Adieu!

Your sincere and obliged friend.

LETTER XLVII.

MRS JACKSON, in Edinburgh.

Lichfield, June 3, 1806.

I AM most sorry for those cruel circumstances in your destiny, which, through so many years, suspended our correspondence; comforted, however, that the full flowing affluence, from which the misconduct of others, and some too generous indiscretions of your own, had cast you, now, after severe distresses, rises to a decent competence, satisfying your ever moderate wishes as to the comforts of life. That you are indebted to filial duty for that blessing, must render it doubly sweet; and doubly have you deserved it by your exemplary duty to your own mother.

I thank you for the solicitude you express to hear that the perilous disposition to a dizziness, which throws every thing into chaos around me, is softened. I hope I may say, with truth, that its force is abated. Earlier had I told you so, but for my request to Mr Scott, the poetic luminary of your northern region, that he would send my long letter of the 25th of last March

for your perusal. It was full on the subject of my health. Soon I hope to reply to his acknowledgment of that scroll; in which acknowledgment he mentions his purpose to call upon you, and cultivate your society.

I please myself with the thought that the purpose is, ere this time, accomplished. He is an admirable creature, as well in his heart as in his genius and various knowledge. If my health was not utterly incompetent to so long a journey, I should not be able to resist his pressing invitation to scenes which, in my estimation, are so highly, so dearly classical; and whose right to be so estimated, the charming poetry of himself and his satellites has so largely augmented; but now in these beloved precincts, I must, perforce, even if it were not by inclination, "set up my life-enduring rest."

Mr and Mrs Whalley came to me on the 14th of last month, on a few days visit. Time has not dimmed the radiance of our friend's countenance, nor chilled the warmth of his heart; nor yet, with all the aid of bitter experience, subdued the insane violence of his belligerent politics. He brought me your long expected volume*.

* Dialogues on the Doctrine and Duties of Christianity, for the Instruction of the Young, by Mrs John Jackson, published 1806.—*S.*

I find them an ingenious commentary on the Scriptures, for the use of young people, which, as they are in so few instances dialogue, but rather reader and commentator, I should therefore have better liked that as their title. Dialogue has, to me, always implied mutual investigation, reasoning and argument, doubt and solution.

Those who know not the author of these books, will be impressed in her favour by the preface and introduction, while those who *do* know her, will meet in them the genuine effusions of her talents, and the modesty with which she bears them.

Your volumes quote Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Horne. By your not noticing the hostility of the latter to the former, I apprehend that you do not know how strenuously it existed. A few years back, I met with the Life of Horne, Bishop of Norwich, and extracted from it the following curious passages, little calculated to inspire respect for his wisdom.

" He was persuaded that the system of divinity in the Scriptures is explained and attested by their account of created nature ; that the Mosaic cosmogony is true ; that the Bible, in virtue of its originality and inspiration, is fitter to explain all other books than any book to explain it ; that literature was hostile to Christianity, and to a

right understanding of the Scriptures; that the sciences of metaphysics, mathematics, and ethics, lead directly to deism. Mr Horne was always convinced that Sir Isaac Newton and Dr Clarke had, by introducing speculations of their own, formed a design to undermine and overthrow the theology of the Scriptures, and to bring in the Stoical *anima mundi* in the place of the true God; that heathenism was about to rise again in the world out of their speculations, and reputed grand discoveries in natural philosophy.

"This suspicion of an evil design in Clarke and Sir Isaac Newton, took early possession of the Bishop of Norwich's mind, and was not changed or shaken through life. It was further confirmed by reports, which he had heard, of the private good understanding between them and the sceptics of their day, as Collins, Toland, Tindall, &c.

"Our young divine, taking first a ridiculous view of the whole matter, would always consider Sir Isaac Newton's system as a dangerous attempt upon our established religion, and a palpable insult upon truth and reason. He drew a parallel between the heathen doctrines, in the Somnium Scipionis of Cicero, and the Newtonian plan of the cosmotheorial system.

"He wrote against it in advanced life, in a mild and serious pamphlet, which he called a

Fair, Candid, and impartial State of the Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr Hutchinson.

" It claims for the latter against the former the discovery of the true physiological causes by which, under the power of the Creator, the natural world is moved and directed."

You congratulate me in your conviction that the now long-enduring malady in my head has in no degree impaired my intellects.—Perhaps not, except that it has considerably affected my memory. Names escape me strangely, and all those prompt recollections necessary at the whist-table. These are trifling privations, only as they threaten greater.

In the course of the last winter and spring Miss Fern read to me Lord Orford's Posthumous Works, and Godwin's Life of Chaucer. His lordship's letters possess the arch-chymic power, for they turn the lead of common-life themes and domestic occurrences to sterling gold. They are a perfect luxury of wit and humour. His reminiscences familiarize us with the interior of the court of George the First and Second, and display, in full light, the numskullism of both those regal personages.

" How oft at royalty poor folk must scoff,
Were distance not the foil which sets it off!"

Lord Orford lived to laugh and to make others laugh, and his heart was kind and warm, his friendship disinterested, fervent, and steady; but all the fruits of a great and sublime imagination, whether in prose or verse, were tasteless to him.—Such are the inconsistencies in human characters. How odd it was that he should have written a tragedy upon a crime so dark and gigantic as to force his own muse into those altitudes, whither he never would follow the genius of his contemporaries.

Godwin's biographic work is, in fact, a very interesting history of the reign of our third Edward, his grandson, and of the life of the noble John of Gaunt, to whose memory our historians have, in comparison with Godwin, done so little justice. On their pages the heroes, great men, and distinguished women of that period, pass before our eyes like figures in a magic lantern; Godwin places us amongst them, and we feel as if they had been our familiar acquaintance.

He enables us to sail on a full tide of political events, and of the customs and manners, arts and sciences, of an epoch emerging from barbarian darkness; but this author is insanely partial to the poetic powers of Chaucer, whose compositions, allowing for the disadvantage of obsolete language, have so little good which is not trans-

lation, and so much that is tedious, unnatural, conceited, and obscure. Amid scenes and circumstances, so much more interesting than any which appertain to Chaucer, the poet pops up his nose at intervals, like a wooden buoy, floating, sinking, and rising, amongst a throng of gallant boats and vessels, on the billows of the ocean. Adieu!

LETTER XLVIII.

Rev. T. S. Whalley of Bath.

Lichfield, June 12, 1806.

You are right, Ashbourn Hall has been over-praised, nor do I wonder to see you writing that you looked in vain in the walks, the canal, and amid the plantations, for proofs of Sir Brooke Boothby's celebrated taste, and for visual evidence of the many thousands which he is said to have expended on that ancestral spot.

You did not examine the house where I think Sir Brooke displayed more happy contrivance and elegant fancy, than in the disposition of the pleasure-grounds. It has one peculiar apartment

on the ground-floor. It is two rooms laid into one, which, as he could not elevate the ceiling, had wanted height, if he had not produced the effect of good proportion by a columnar chimney-piece in the middle, whose smoke is taken off by horizontal flues. There is a grate on each side, and an arch to right and left, through which the company pass and repass, without losing sight of each other. A conservatory, the whole length of this double apartment, is divided from it by large sash windows, which open and shut at pleasure, while the room is lighted by windows opposite to each other, at the two extremities.

On your next day's exploring I trust you were less disappointed; yet you probably thought that Ilebam wanted variety and Dovedale foliage; but, I think, there was no disappointment at Matlock, and I am sure there was none in the genuine boast of Gothic architecture at York. If it possessed such a free and lawny area as surrounds Lichfield cathedral, and looked into such a lovely green vale as it commands, York-Minster might indeed say, what even yet she has a right to say, "I am, and there is none beside me;" that is in the poetic sense, for in the literal one we know there are many beside it, smoky and squalid mansions, that crowd up to the magnificent struc-

ture, and prevent the fair display of its antique glory.

I did not write to you at York, uncertain how long you meant to stay there. If your tour should not yet be completed, my letter will patiently wait for you at Mendip-Lodge *, whose superior no tour can show you in the singular graces of situation, art, and taste.

You would feel local enthusiasm on the lawns of Harewood, consecrated and made classical by Mason's muse.

The travellers have been much inquired after by all here who had the pleasure of their society on their late visit to this mansion; short, alas! as it was welcome. To have once conversed with Mr Whalley, and to be interested for him, are circumstances which follow in course wherever sensibility is not an utter desideratum. They will all, and none more than the captives, be gratified to live in his remembrances.

All are in *statu quo* except M. Destrosses, whose passport has been obtained by the Russian ambassador, to whom he had the good fortune to be known; and, for he expects it every day,

* Mr Whalley's seat, twelve miles beyond Bristol, on the Devonshire road.—S.

" His bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne."

I never witnessed more perfect happiness. A sight rare as it is delightful. He dined with me on Sunday, and ate little. I observed it—" Ah, Madam, I am too happy to eat; and sleep no more me. I go to bed, and fall asleep one hour; dream see my wife, my children—wake, find so much better than dream—am so glad cannot drowsy." How eloquent to me appeared this broken English, in which, from my ignorance of French, he was obliged to express himself!

The joy of this truly good creature is proportioned to his sorrow, borne with such sweet patience through three long years, yet leaving its pale characters on his countenance. My other French friend, Captain Gisholme, is a very different being. Gay, lively, ardent, yet very ingenuous, he is impatient that his youth should stagnate in long years of captivity; but the nuptial and paternal ties have not pulled at his heart-strings.

If you are returned home you found beauteous Mendip glowing in the gorgeous blaze of a former-days summer. Quiet, and my spacious and cool mansion have prevented its ardor from oppressing my invalid frame, from which, thank Heaven, the paroxysms of my disease have been avert-

ed these past several weeks, though I have had some threatening feelings since the dawn of yesterday, when I was awakened by a pealing horizon, and saw, with all my wonted dismay,

"The angry shafts of Heaven gleam round my bed."

You have witnessed the irrational extreme of my terror on these occasions; the miserable result of early impression; when, in my fifth year, our nursery-maid was screaming, and in fainting fits, amid a fiery tempest; and the poets, the familiar friends, not only of my youth, but of my very infancy, increased this extreme apprehension. How did the following lines fasten themselves on my childhood-memory:

"Fear no more the lightning's flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone!"

and once when my father was trying to reason me out of my fears, I said, "Why, papa, did Shakespeare tell a dead person that he need not fear what was so terrible to the living, if lightning and thunder were not dangerous to any one?"—My imagination was on Shakespeare's side, and where that is very strong, it is always too hard for reason. Providentially Thursday morning's storm

did not last more than an hour, and cooler breezes have since attempered the noon-day heats and the night's sultriness.

Have you, since you left me, heard of dear, dear Clarissa, formed of every creature's best. Her country residence will soon commence, and I may perhaps be indulged with a few hours of her so prized society. I can say of its delights, as of impeded love,

> " Seldom the joy, and fleeting is its date,
> But that which makes it anxious, makes it great."

I hope you found those monuments of your ancestors which you sought in Derbyshire. The veneration with which they are surveyed is a sweet, a solemn, a sacred feeling. It is amongst those, of which Johnson finely says, whatever withdraws us from the power of the senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, and the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Adieu!

LETTER XLIX.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, June 20, 1806.

WHAT an insurmountable bar is a frame impaired by time, and locally fettered by malady, to such longing as your cordial invitation excites! I should esteem it happiness, of no common species, to be the guest of Mr Scott; to become conscious of his form and accents, whose imagination has so often exerted its gentle witchery over my spirit, and to share with him the "feast of reason, and the flow of soul," in the wide range and freedom of colloquial intercourse.

From my earliest youth, Scotland has been to me classic ground, which I could at no time have trodden without the liveliest enthusiasm. You have extremely increased all that inspires it. Sacred to my love and veneration is the Caledonian scenery, Lowland and Highland. From Ramsay to Walter Scott, the sublime and the tender emanations of genius have consecrated the former, while, as the poet Gray observed, imagination, in all her pomp, resided many centuries ago on the

bleak and barren mountains of the Hebrides. If *then* by the harp of Ossian, *now* by the lyre of Scott, resounding to us from the brink of the sullen Moneira.

Apropos of Ossian; you and I have never interchanged our sentiments on the reality or pretence of that bold poetic source. I should like to know your opinion, though, for myself, I care little whether it be wholly ancient, or chiefly ancient, or if it was in a great measure inspiration in the mind of the ostensible translator. My opinion halts between the first and last of those conjectures. Dr Johnson's scornful assertions on the subject, have no weight with me; believing, as I have ever done, that his impatient jealousy of a new classic, of such high antiquity, emerging from the mists of time, and in the land of his detestation, was the motive of his journey to Scotland; that he went thither for the express purpose of giving weight and credence to his verdict in a cause which he had prejudged, long before he pretended to examine the evidence.

One of the strongest arguments for the originality of the work, results from a circumstance, to which he alludes in his brutal letter to Mr Macpherson, as a reason for disdaining to consider him as a man of genius:—" Since the pub-

lication of your Homer, you are no longer formidable," or to that effect.

Now the weakness of that translation becomes the strength of our internal evidence, that its author was not responsible for the production of some of the noblest poetry which has been since the world began. We also find a powerful support of its claim upon early time, in that exemption from involuntary adoption of recent phraseology, from which no confessedly modern writer is free. The very few passages which seem to resemble parts of the Old Testament, of Homer, and of Virgil, may be fairly imputed to coincidence. Those few passages excepted, no appearance of poetic reading can be found in Ossian. Powerful also, on the side of its ancientry, is the utter absence of every allusion to arts and sciences, or to agriculture. We scarcely conceive the possibility of imposition thus guarding itself at all these points.

The opposite scale, however, does not kick the beam. The graceful urbanity of the sentiments and manners, at a period when England was in a state so rude and barbarous;—how might that be? Would no historian have remarked a preference so vast and decided on the part of Scotland? and how came she to have degenerated so

much in the dignity of address, and in the graces of sensibility, as, from the Border Minstrelsy, it appears she had? How came the Caledonian bards of the third or fourth century to have exalted and refined the petit morals of their heroes, so much more than the druids and bards of England and Wales, had raised and adorned the princes and chieftains of their regions? Neither the dissertation prefixed to my edition of Ossian's poems, published in 1765, nor yet the far more eloquent and able critical treatise, at the end of the second volume, quite satisfactorily account for that great superiority. No ancient druidic song, translated from the Cimbric, approaches, in tenderness or elevation of sentiment, or in dignity of manners, the poetry of those volumes.

Excepting Dr Johnson's contumelious and angry assertions, I have not examined any of the arguments that seek to prove them forgery. I liked not to have my mind disturbed. It was sufficient for me that my imagination was raised, my passions interested, and my ear gratified even to luxury, whenever I opened those pages of dubious origin.

One circumstance struck me forcibly, when first, in my juvenile years, I explored them, and it is on the incredulous side of the dispute; a circumstance of which Blair's Dissertation takes no

notice. The wolf, which doubtless then infested those as all other mountainous regions, is not once mentioned in these volumes. I expected to find him in the awful march of their terrible graces. His howl would have solemnly blended with the roar of their mountain streams, and with the voice of departed heroes, amid the tempestuous winds.

Your gracious acceptance and approbation of my Address to Tweed, and of its melancholy companion, The Grave of Youth, gratifies me much. No praise can be more precious to me than yours, or more honourable, since that which has pleased you cannot be worthless.

I thank you for the portraits of Southey and Wordsworth. The genius of the former is beyond comparison the superior. Strong gleams of poetry occasionally appear in Wordsworth's strains, but they are sometimes turgid, and often obscure, and oftener yet debased by mean language. You think Southey above that jealousy of his poetic rivals, which is certainly unworthy so great an understanding. I fear this confidence is more candid than experience will bear out; for, alas! in how many highly-gifted minds has it lurked!

What say you, my friend!—your last great work dismissed from your thoughts till my letter revived its faded traces! Ah, can a father for-

get his child? and such a child!—A new star in the northern constellation!—If, in the formation of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, some few spots might, by more time and attention, have been removed from its orbit, their existence will not prevent its shining with splendour bright and undiminished through future ages.

I remain, &c.

LETTER L.

REV. RICH. SYKES of Westella.

Lichfield, June 26, 1806.

I THANK you for the precious gift you have sent me. Its intrinsic value is high from its rareness and beauty; its ideal value to me incalculable; and the obligation is double, first, for the long-loved friend's sake whose steps it supported; and next, as a distinguished proof of your continued regard. You say this gold-headed cane is made of the horn of the sea-unicorn. The purest ivory could not surpass it in polish or whiteness. Its voluted wreaths are doubtless in the natural horn; art could not produce them.

I should have great pleasure in seeing the trio, then, from Foxholes, again my guests, since want of health and strength for long journies forbids me to be theirs.

You are all at Westella, I conclude. Beautiful must have been its lawns and glades beneath the late brilliant suns. Our fruits, however, disappoint the hopes which experience had taught us to entertain when the spring has been cold and leafless; but indeed we had no spring; usurping winter chased her over our plains,

> "Chill'd her dim morns, and bid her driving sleets
> Deform the day delightless,"

till, pale and unrobed, she leapt at once into the arms of summer; a summer ardent as of the olden time; and this from the ides of May till the calends of the present month;" and till, indeed, the parched soil began to need that vicissitude, so sweetly mentioned by the stricken Job, when praising the goodness of our Creator, thus:—"He giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth water upon the fields;"—but the present horizon is somewhat too winterly—the transition too extreme, at least for the feelings of invalids like myself. The above quotation from divine song was set to music by the late Orpheus of the choirs,

Dr Green, and forms part of an anthem. A strain of sweetness and devotion, never exceeded, gives tenfold charm to that lovely acknowledgment. O how the silver tones of dear, lost Saville's voice, the enthusiasm and grace of his expression, gave the last exquisite effect to sacred poetry and sacred music in combination. Several years past, after a long drought, which threatened to destroy the harvest, a plenteous, yet soft, shower descended. The evening was warm, and the clouds, which had been many days of flattering gloom, had not increased in their lower. Some friends were with me in the saloon, the doors of which were opened on the lawn. The long-expected, long-desired rain dropt silently, yet amply, down. Mr S. immediately stept to the door, and, with clasped hands and moist uplifted eyes, sung that super-human strain. We all caught his grateful piety, and shed those tears, which to shed, seems a foretaste of heaven.

Probably never more shall these eyes be thus surcharged; for I have survived the dear friends of my youth whose habitations were near mine. Kind voices speak to me yet, but they are the voices of later years. They who utter them listen to me, but they cannot talk with me in the animation of conscious remembrance concerning the events and associates of my blossomed life; of

those customs and manners which have so changed their character. Art and labour have given richness to cultivation, taste has made every garden a landscape, and architecture has expanded and adorned our mansions. Our young females are all artists. They draw, and paint, and play, sing, and dance, with professional skill, and nothing but the understanding and the heart are left incultivate. The sensibilities are sacrificed to cold vanity, ambition, and the desire of exhibiting. Thus the charming simplicity, the fervour, and wild graces of youth are lost, which shone in the companions of my blossoming years. Is this truth, or the day-dream of waning life, which gilds the past with imaginary light, and wraps the present in gloom not less ideal? Health and parental hopes give your mind better employment than "gathering with me the wintry wreaths of regret, and pouring the dirge of departed days."

Adieu!

LETTER LI.

Mrs M. Powys, at Clifton.

Lichfield, June 28, 1806.

I CONGRATULATE you on the wonderful recovery of your long-suffering friend by her second voyage to Oporto. She is the only instance I have known of so much benefit received from arid climes as to counteract the privation of comforts to invalids, used to all the circumstances by which a pastoral soil, industry, and commercial wealth, attemper our frequent atmospheric inclemency.

O! that you could have added dear Lovel's liberation and safe return to these good tidings of your Grace Hardy! Most painful to me is the thought that the son of my once dear, and ah! for ever dear Honora Sneyd languishes in captivity, tyrannically inflicted by the French emperor, in defiance of the laws of nations—yet will I hope that the weeks which have elapsed since you wrote to me may have given him that freedom, which many of his fellow-sufferers have recently obtained.

Mrs Smith and myself are much gratified by your cordial participation of her late good fortune. On a dividend of the property which herself and family share with some other relations of Mr Pegge, his bequest to her amounts to five instead of four thousand pounds. May God give his blessing to this legacy of unexpected extent! Her Honora, now married to Mr Jager, has been so lucky to obtain that pleasant little mansion in the vicarage, which, from the year 1765 to 1772, was the home of her dear grandfather. Behind it is a pretty garden, which, in those dear interesting years of youth and delight, my Honora Sneyd used to call "Damon's Bower." Often did we visit it, and seldom failed to repeat on our entrance,

> "Was ever scene so deck'd with flowers?
> Were ever flowers so gay?"

The last time, till yesterday, that I ever was in that mansion and garden, as appears by my journal-book, was the 2d of August 1771, and on the 2d of August 1803, its dear and excellent master was struck from existence!

In this month, more even than in any other, is my heart oppressed with its inextinguishable sorrow. From the 5th to the 10th was the prelusive

period of terror and alarm for the precious life. It was succeeded by those of fallacious hopes, which strengthened as they rolled on to the dreadful evening of the next month's second day.

Every hour of that period passes in review before me, as its mournful anniversary "rings on within the clock." So will it always be

"Till the last pang shall tear them from my heart."

On Mr and Mrs Jager's and Mrs Smith's solicitation, Miss Fern and myself drank tea and supt last night in that so consecrated mansion. Very painful were its local impressions. They annihilated, at frequent intervals, the many many intervening years from my last visit to it, to the present; and those years, whose stamp they bore, rushed back on my soul, decked in gaiety and joy; in music and in song; in the bloom, the smiles, of Honora Sneyd; in the graces and in the accents of Saville; but, O! how afflicting did the contrasting sense of everlasting privation render them! Only two other mansions could so powerfully restore the past, and those I think I shall never, under any circumstances, prevail upon myself to enter, especially my dear friend's latest habitation, now the home of his daughter and her mother; for there stands the terrible image of death, blasting, in one

unwarned moment, the beloved form which returning health had illuminated during fourteen preceding days, till the instant at which the fatal dart was thrown;—but, O! incessant theme of my reflections, cease thou to spread thy dark pall upon these leaves!—yet you will not be impatient of the funereal gloom, since well you knew, and sacredly did you prize, those angelic virtues which warmed the now cold heart of the deplored.

It gives me pleasure that you have met with the young and very ingenious Miss Margaret Holford. She is, in every respect, extremely worthy of your esteem, and her talents are very considerable. The fire of genius irradiates her compositions; they are not book-made strains. The praises of such a muse do honour to the praised, be they whom they may. Her beautiful elegy, addressed to me, crept into the newspapers, with her signature, and dated from Chester; but, indeed, I did not send or know of its being sent to any of the public prints. Its insertion, however, procured me the favour of an anonymous letter, which pronounced the elegy your last letter so justly applauds as poetic composition, " bombast nonsense, and the evident fabrication, not of Margaret Holford of Chester, since there is no such person, but of Anna Seward, who, under that assumed name, had been extolling her own

silly productions." I guessed the author of this nameless scroll. Full of scorpions, stinging its own peace, must be the dark and restless bosom which can trouble itself to fabricate such libels. The objects of its malice are avenged by the incessant torments it inflicts in the breast from whence it flows.

I am glad to observe you shewing cause why Portugal is not likely to be melted down into that so general empire, which France and its monarch have obtained through the measures of our late ministry. A revolution there, must be terribly distressing to your poor Grace Hardy; but I am sorry to see you complaining of ennui and melancholy. They ought not to oppress a mind like yours, so full of self-resources. I should have hoped that books, music, exercise, and that portion of tolerably pleasant society which your residence at Clifton must surely afford, would have dispersed those unwholesome shadows.

You want some one to serve, and to be good to, every day, and all the day. To such duties your whole existence has been dedicated, and your spirits languish in the comparative stagnation of the "twice blest faculty."

When may I hope to see you here? Suffer

me to believe that you will not let the summer, already declining from its zenith, pass away without giving me the satisfaction of mingling my spirit with yours, in the thirty-seventh year of our amity; on which no cold cloud of distrust or transient alienation ever passed. We have not been changeable, but, O! what changes have we witnessed in states and individuals!—and how rarely for the better! Farewell!

LETTER LII.

Miss Catherine Mallet, of London.

Lichfield, July 29, 1806.

I should have thought, dear friend, that the species of gaiety in which you have so frequently of late mingled, the syrens of the opera, the theatric powers of Cooke, and dramatic poetry in the unequalled energy and illumination of Mrs Siddons's eloquence, pathos, expression, and grace, must have recompensed, instead of increased the irksomeness of a summer residence in London to you, who have so much sensibility and just taste. However, I am flattered by your application of

lines in my eleventh sonnet to the ceremonial oppressions of thronged society.

Cooke is a very forcible but a very rough actor. No man better looks the villain, or has better dumb shew, by gesture and transition of countenance, or better expresses, by voice as well as by action, the stormy sallies of the bad passions, or the dark cunning, or mean blandishment of a despicable character. I witnessed his first stated abilities in his representation of Richard the Third, at Birmingham, a few years back; but when he came to that fine soliloquy, engrafted from the chorus in Henry the Fifth, he made wretched work of it. He destroyed the measure by running the lines into confluence, and ruined the solemnity by common-life intonation.

Last week I conversed with Mr, late Colonel, Barry, who lost Mr Newton's immense fortune by the integrity and wisdom of his politics,—for his manly avowal of them to his narrow-minded and arbitrary relation, and condemnation of Mr Pitt's sanguinary intrigues on the Continent, so pernicious to its welfare, and to that of this country.

Mr Barry is in confidential intimacy with many who stand high in parliamentary consideration, and he pledges his seldom erring opinion, that peace ere long will be made. He says it became

absolutely necessary that Great Britain should seek speedy reconcilement with the foe, from the hour when that miserable coalition met its assured defeat on the plain of Austerlitz. He observed that we must get the best terms we can, and stoop our national pride to the consequences of our folly.

As to the bugbear dangers with which the furious tories surround the olive, Mr Barry calls them mere idle clamour. Let it, he said, be recollected that, amidst all the enormities of the French emperor, England has received no operative instance of them, so flagrantly perfidious as the part which the old government of France took with America, after having solemnly pledged her alliance with us when we went to war with our colonies.

Mr Barry asserts, what I have long thought, that the expence of augmenting our navy, in proportion as Napoleon and his successors shall augment theirs, will be as nothing in comparison with the redoubling taxes which must, *ad infinitum*, ensue on protracting the war, while every year of such protraction will increase the number and importance of the sacrifices which we must, at last, make for peace. Two points, he continued, are at Mr Fox's heart,—by a speedy peace to save the country, if yet she may be saved, and to abolish the inhuman slave trade, a measure to

which Mr Pitt never gave his sincere support; but, he added, Mr Fox cannot live long; and if the era of political salvation, and of national mercy, does not soon arrive, he will die with the sanguinary shades of fruitless war, and of anti-christian barbarity, unpierced, around him.

The gentle, the good De Brosses received his passport a few weeks back, and stretched his glad wings for his native country. Never did I witness such deep-felt happiness. The days which intervened between the notice and the arrival of the emancipating paper, were days of extasy. Such delight is never *given* to man; it must be purchased, and that by long and cruel suffering; and even then, the transition from woe to transport must be immediate and unexpected, ere the felicity can be so high-wrought. M. De Brosses had made so many fruitless applications for his freedom, that he had despaired of the success of this last.

He said to me the day he left us,—"Ah, Madam! go last night to Borocup Hill—into Stowe Valley—take leave of them; cried for joy; blessed them—blest Lichfield—blest all pitied my exile—blessed you, Madam, many times." This imperfect English was real eloquence.

I prevailed on Mr Jager to give me, for this gentleman, a coloured drawing he had made of

Stowe Vale, the lake in its bosom, with the venerable mother church* upon the lake's bank; and I procured for him also a beautiful little copper-plate of the choral structure, with its three stately spires. The drawing is faithful to the scene, though Mr Jager's self-taught pencil has not yet attained the delicacy of tint, nor that fine illuminated haze, which distinguishes the school of Glover.

Amiable Madame De Brosses sent her husband, last Christmas, an interesting picture of their two children, a girl of ten, and a boy of eight years. It is about the size of a breakfast plate, and represents them sitting at a table, with the map of England before them. The girl has her finger on Lichfield; her eyes turned towards her brother, with the most animated and tender expression.

Indolence and other avocations had induced a long delay of the promise I made M. De Brosses, to paraphrase his wife's verses, the Sorrows of Absence, in English rhythm, from your literal translation of them in prose. Some days before the notice of his passport came, a little recess from my epistolary duties enabled me to perform my engagement. I inclose a copy of my elegy. You will see how many ideas I have added, which

* Stowe Church was built before the Cathedral.—*S.*

were not in the French verses, but which I found naturally suggesting themselves to my pen, and in perfect harmony with the theme. You will find the portrait of the children introduced, or, I should rather say, the circumstance which gave its design.

Captain De Brosses was delighted with my attempt. He has many friends at Liverpool, where Mr Roscoe and his satellites have inspired that classic taste, which may not be found in Lichfield, rich as it is in those local distinctions which throw so much glory around it. My liberated friend wrote to me from Liverpool, in a style of the most animated gratitude, for, in truth, very trifling obligations. He says that, having shewn my paraphrastic elegy to a number of his acquaintance there, a quantity of copies have been solicited and obtained. I am more flattered than gratified by the request, conscious, by mortifying experience, what errors, fatal to the sense, arise and multiply beneath the transcribing pen.

At tea-time yesterday, a pleasing circumstance occurred to Miss Fern and myself. Cousin H. White introduced Dr Mansel, the master of Trinity-college, Cambridge, accompanied by Mr Shepperd, an ingenious tutor in that university, and by four charming daughters, the eldest sixteen.

" Their lovely mother perish'd in her prime."

He is the friend, from their mutual youth, of our poetic and most estimable Mr Mathias. Cheerful intelligence and ingenuous candour shine out in his countenance; knowledge and eloquence flow from his lips. He was public orator before he attained his present high and leading rank in the university. The animated attention with which Dr Mansel honoured me, the praise he lavished on my poems, and the passages he quoted from them, constituted one of the most poignant literary gratifications I ever received. The hope that they may live, is attached to the demonstrated impression they had made on a mind of such distinguished classical endowment. He has all that glow of local veneration which is ever the companion of imagination, learning, and philanthropy. He exulted in treading the apartments of this mansion, in which the talents of Johnson and Garrick expanded beneath the patronage of the Lichfield Mecænas, Mr Walmsley, then tenant of the palace. He visited the celebrated willow, under whose branches, of unequalled magnitude, the infant Johnson had played; explored the apartments of Mr Moresby's house at the foot of Stowe Hill, which was the dwelling of the late Mrs Gastril, with whom Johnson, in his

waning years, passed so much of his time on his visits to Lichfield.

Dr Mansel often exclaimed, Lichfield is, indeed, classic ground of peculiar distinction. He is the farthest in the world from being one of those leaden spirits, " which could traverse, cold and unmoved, any region which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue." He also gave due praise to the genuine loveliness of the Cathedral area; of my walks, lawns, and bowers, and the green vale they overlook, with the glassy lake in its bosom.

The malady in my head is, I trust, softened by the painful remedy by which I combat the paroxysms; but it threatens me to-day, possibly owing to the dense and low-hung clouds that seem surcharged with sulphureous matter, and the distant thunder-growls. Frequent, this summer, have been the fiery tempests, and very terrible in their fury. They make me extremely ill, and extremely irrational. It is in vain that I tell myself the cause of my dread, in its worst-possible effect, is but an instantaneous and painless dismission from a time-worn existence, upon whose prolongation bodily suffering must, in all likelihood, accumulate.

I am grieved to observe your presentiment of a long absence from Lichfield. With what plea-

sure should I see you the abiding guest of these walls! and gilding, with intellectual rays, the deprived and gloomy evening of my life!—Adieu!

LETTER LIII.

REV. DR MANSEL, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Lichfield, Aug. 1, 1806.

MY dear Sir,—I trust your journey back to Cambridge proved safe and pleasant, and that you found your injured boy in a state of progressive strength and hope.

My spirit yet glows with the reflected light of those hours which your kind predilection in my favour, your knowledge and eloquence, illuminated.

Observe how speedily I avail myself of the permitted honour of addressing Dr Mansel, and, under cover of sending him the receipt he requested for a pleasant beverage, seek to prolong our intercourse. That, for the sake of my writings, it was sought by him with so much generous warmth of heart, is one of the most gratifying

distinctions they ever received. The proofs he gave of remembering so many passages in them seem to sign their apotheosis.

When I had the highly-prized happiness of your conversation, you expressed surprise at my owning that, except in miscellaneous collections, my courage to encounter the trouble and anxiety of renewed publication had been appalled by the injustice which authors, much my superiors, had met from the reviewers. You politely asserted that they could not injure my compositions in the opinion of the public; but indeed I knew by experience, that they can retard their sale, and what is poetic fame but the multiplication of editions?

You afterwards confessed that your desire, regularly and attentively to peruse Madoc, had been chilled and repressed by the hootings of those nameless critics who, like their prototypes of the feathered race, shut their eyes on the sun, and cry, "there is no daylight." If they can influence Dr Mansel, when so great a poet is their subject, well may I be conscious of their power to blight the less-noble fruits of my imagination.

In years long past I heard Lucy Porter tell Dr Johnson that she should like sometimes to purchase new publications, and ask him if she might trust the reviewers. "Infallibly, dear Lucy,"

he replied, " provided you buy what they abuse, and never any thing they praise."

Your lovely and engaging daughter's injunction that I would spare her a page on this sheet is not forgotten, though it has been disobeyed. If I live she will, in a few posts, receive proof that it is not.

Last night Mr and Mrs Nares arrived at Mr Thomas White's, who lives in Mr Nares' prebendal house, where he always keeps his annual two month's residence. No harmony can be more perfect than between them and their frank-hearted tenants. Mr Nares has wit, and is agreeable, though without much taste or feeling for poetic composition of the higher orders.

My friend and neighbour, Mr Simpson, a barrister, and once of Trinity, was absent from Lichfield when you honoured our little city by your presence. He called upon me this morning, and I listened to his regret that he had thus been deprived of the pleasure of conversing with you. He praised your genius and literature, and the brilliance and happiness of your epigrams, one of which he recited, though imperfectly. It was on the order which a stupid and tyrannic man of your college had caused to be given for excluding dogs. I was delighted with the turn of it, and long for a copy, if I might be so far indulged.

And now what can be said for the length of this intrusion? Ah! I can only plead for it the intoxication of Dr Mansel's praise. What female brain could sustain it soberly?

I have the honour to remain, my dear Sir, your ever obliged, &c.

LETTER LIV.

Rev. H. F. Cary.

Lichfield, Aug. 7, 1806.

You had earlier received my thanks for your second volume of Dante's Inferno, had I not waited to make myself mistress of its contents.

Though the power of writing is, in a considerable degree, restored to me, I cannot read with any continuance. Miss Fern read three or four cantos aloud every night after supper when we were alone, and that was not above two nights in a week. Hence your translation was of slow progress.

From the impression left on our minds when it was finished, we think that this has much less poetic matter than the first volume. There I

frequently traced the *prima stamina* of several images in Milton and other poets. Only once in these cantos did I find a probable source of modern poetry. Possibly the strange imagination on page 295 suggested the tale of Donica in Southey's first miscellaneous volume; but I cannot subscribe to your suggestion that Dante's three-headed devil was the origin of that fine description of the different and successive changes in the agitated countenance of Lucifer.

> "Thus while he spoke each passion dimm'd his face.
> Thrice chang'd with pale ire, envy, and despair."

Why should we impute this simply-grand portrait of a demoniac countenance to a conception in the Italian bard too grotesque and monstrous to be sublime, or in any degree an object of imitation to a poet so dignified as Milton?

This second part of the Inferno increases my wonder at the longevity of Dante's fame. Few are the passages of genuine poetry, of power to mitigate the ridiculous infelicity of plot; an epic poem consisting wholly of dialogue and everlasting egotism! Were you never struck by the presumptuous malice of design in this poem? with the inherent cruelty of that mind which could delight in suggesting pains and penalties at once so

odious and so horrid? The terrible graces of the Inferno lose all their dignity in butcherly, grid-iron, and intestinal exhibitions, which become fatal to our esteem for the contriver.

I best like the thirty-second and thirty-third cantos. Their pictures are less disgustingly shocking, and more within the powers of our conception. Of the exterior symptoms of perishing coldness we have seen some resembling instances. The following passage has a portion of sublimity.

> ——————A thousand visages
> Then mark'd I, which the keen and eager cold
> Had shap'd into a doggish grin;"

but in the fiery punishments, the representation of talking flames can be nothing but ridiculous. O! how the hell of Dante sinks before the infernal regions of our own Milton!

In several passages you have not been able to remove the veil of inflated and dense obscurity which envelopes the meaning of this fire and smoke poet. Your notes tell us the names and terrestrial residences of the punished, but throw no light upon half what the poet says about them. Dante is the only poetic author, of high reputation, whom I cannot understand. I think if you

had fully comprehended the enigmas you have Anglicized, you would, by more perspicuous language, have enabled your readers to understand them also, though perhaps at the expence of some portion of that literality unfortunately the first object of so many translators. Let the versifying translator be tenacious on that head, but the poetic ones, Cowper and Cary, should have scorned it; at least in parts where the original has not expressed its meaning perspicuously.

The twenty-fourth canto opens with a description of hoar-frost similarized to snow, and it has somewhat of the softer grace of modern poetry; and though I cannot refer to the page, there is a simile of rills hastening to the Arno, which presents a pleasing landscape.

——————"In the world,
So may thy name still lift its forehead high."—

The forehead of a name!! It was by such extravagant personification that Mr Hayley injured his poetry, even some of his best.

Page 195 is the filthiest horridness I ever met without the limits of this volume, for within it there is yet transcending filthiness.—Good heavens! what strange writing will not time sanction? Justly does Shenstone observe, "We par-

don, nay admire, that in an ancient, for which we should execrate a modern poet."

It surprises me, amongst a great deal of good blank-verse, to observe you frequently making use of expressions which debase it, such as *folk* for souls in hell, *tell on't* for *tell of it*, *liker*, *maul*, and other similar vulgarisms. Where (as in Madoc) they occur in works of great human interest from story, dramatic oration, tender pathetic sentiments, and vivid landscape, their use is less mischievous—but recollect what sonorous magnificence of phraseology, what never-stooping dignity of numbers Milton employs in the infernal regions. If, in other parts of the Paradise Lost, he has rigid lines, and plain language, I think we never find them in the realms of misery. The terrible graces should not be slip-shod. Even Southey never permits that.

I hope they have not ranged your horizon so formidably as of late they have appalled ours,

> "When the thunder,
> Wing'd with red lightning and impetuous rage,
> Shook our high spires."

LETTER LV.

REV. DR MANSEL, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Lichfield, Aug. 28, 1806.

YOU are as good to me upon paper as you were in conversation;—you gratify my aspiration after lettered praise, and give to my solicitation one of the most pointed little epigrammatic satires I ever saw. Mr Simpson will consider it as a recovered treasure. He pommelled his temples because the good folk within had been so little faithful to their trust on its subject.—Accept my best thanks for the copy.

Those scintillations of the fancy which constitute wit, have been inadequately defined by the poets and critics, when describing them in the abstract. Dryden says, "Wit is a propriety of thoughts and words adapted to the subject." In the sixty-third number of the Spectator, Addison points out the impotence of that definition, and truly says, that it applies only to general good writing; but he approves Locke's account of wit, which he quotes, and which appears to me scarce-

ly more appropriate. It involves too many requisites, even all which belong to the province of imagination.

Addison is there ingenious in his description of false and of mixed wit; but fails to present the constituent parts of the true. He makes no attempt to catch the volant sparkler and make it sit for its picture. He expatiates about it, and we every moment expect to see that definition on his page, which shall supply the deficiency which he censures in the definition of others—but on this subject he seems somewhat to resemble the scuttle-fish—he stirs up and muddies the sources of his theme; and his own meaning, like that animal, glides away undiscerned in the troubled and darkened current. Of Pope's summary of the powers of wit no notice is taken in the essay of which I have spoken, viz.

> "True wit is nature to advantage drest,
> What oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd."

This is equally vague and indeterminate as Dryden's. Wit has certainly more to do with art than nature. Nature is simple, but wit is combined. The couplet does not even apply to any species of excellent writing, since, if the thoughts be com-

mon-place, no grace of expression, no harmony of numbers, can render them justly admirable.

Least of all do Pope's lines apply to wit, since if the attempt do not strike and surprise, it is not wit. Ideas which are familiar to every mind, that is in any degree capable of reflection, cannot either strike or surprise, with whatever verbal elegance they may be given. New thoughts, or at least new combination of thoughts, are the very essence of wit.

It was I confess presumption in me to attempt analyzing that subtle effervescence, whose analysis by Dryden, Pope, and Locke, is so little satisfactory; but you are so kind to me and mine, that I am tempted to lay the experiment before you.

> Wit must at once be vigorous, keen, and gay,
> Sense, satire, humour, mix'd in frolic play,
> Yet from the coarse grotesque be distant far
> As the smok'd torch-light from the morning star;
> Sprung from strange images in contact wrought,
> The bright collision of an agile thought;
> And when together struck, like flint and fire,
> We start delighted, ponder, and admire;
> While by the union charm'd, we laugh, and wonder
> How things so like so long were kept asunder.

And now permit me to observe, that I had earlier acknowledged the new honour and obliga-

tion which you have conferred upon me, but for the arrival of Sir William Forbes's Memoirs of Beattie, and Cumberland's Life of himself, lent to me on the condition of a very speedy return.

In despite of Mr Cumberland's repeated disavowals of envy and injustice towards other authors, this egotistic volume of his rivets, instead of removing, my long-established conviction that Sheridan's portrait of him, Sir Fretful Plagiary, is not a caricature. That conviction was founded on attested anecdotes of his ingratitude, his pride, and his envy of superior writers. There is an absurd attempt in his Observer to ridicule that immortal and matchless imaginary history, the Clarissa, which Dr Johnson pronounced not only the first novel, but perhaps the first work in this language.

To the author of a little volume of very ingenious essays, published by Cadell in 1788, and entitled Variety, I gave two numbers, which exposed the false reasoning of that invidious tract in the Observer. This history, which the author of that work gives of himself in a huge quarto volume, contains a new attempt to tear the laurels from those glorious volumes. It has the effrontery to call their Grandison a nauseous pedant. And how Cumbey, as Johnson used to call him, writhes under the fame of the young Roscius, and

avows the mortification it cost him to see Master Betty, as in scorn he terms him, going to rehearsal in a coach that bore a ducal coronet!

And, on my word, Cumbey slips his falcon at high game, in verse as well as in prose, since, with equal effrontery to his defamation of Richardson, does he speak of Gray, whom Dr Beattie justly pronounces next to Milton in the strength and grandeur of his muse.

Then with what acrimony does he resent Mr Hayley's testimony to an opinion universal in the learned world, of Dr Bentley as a critic in English poetry. On what foundation that opinion stands let Bentley's ridiculous edition of Milton, with its heap of absurd notes and presumptuous alterations of the text, witness! Surely every author is free to speak his opinion of a deceased brother! If that opinion be unjust, let men of letters prove that injustice by reasons shewn; but for a descendant of an arraigned author to take up the matter with resentment, and make it a family quarrel, is ridiculous in the extreme. There are, however, very amusing things in this selfish quarto—good characteristic portraits of Soame Jennings, Foote, Goldsmith, Johnson, and Garrick; and poor Cumbey was vilely treated by our government concerning that Spanish expedition. The violation of its engagement to him was ut-

terly dishonest and cruel; of which the official letters are proofs incontrovertible.

And now to turn the mirror of reflection on a very different character—the charming poet and philosophical defender of the Christian faith, Dr Beattie. Great and good as he was, his letters contain some assertions which appear to me strange and unfounded. The excellence of prose-writing was at its acmé at the very period in which we find him complaining of its rapid degeneracy. At all times there have been an infinitely greater number of bad and of indifferent writers, than of such as are admirable. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." I do not finish my quotation with *amen*, but with *even so*.

It has been well observed, that living writers are always judged by their worst performance, and deceased ones, and especially the long deceased ones, by their best. Thus also is it with ages, and their literature. That of the past century is over-praised, that of the present is undervalued.

The character of the national style ought, in all justice, to be taken from that of the best authors of the day. If ever there was a time in which we had more accurate, more luminous, more nervous prose than flowed from the pen of Hume, (I

speak only of his style), Johnson, Thomas Warton, Burke, Robertson, Blair, Gray, Walpole, Mrs Montague, and Hannah More, let them be instanced!

Surely the god of Beattie's idolatry as to style, Addison, had not their nerve or perspicuity in serious disquisition, for in easy playful humour he was unrivalled; but his celebrated papers in the Spectator on the Pleasures of Imagination are, to my conception, confused, and in a great degree incomprehensible. On repeated experiment I have found them more narcotic than stimulant to my attention, and, when I close the pages, nothing of their contents remain on my memory; while Burke, on a subject much of the same nature, his discriminations of the sublime and beautiful, awakens and energizes, interests, and entertains me. That author, in his metaphysical and political effusions, and Johnson in his moral and critical oratory, are never obscure to my comprehension, or fail indelibly to impress their dictates on the texture of my brain, however often I may refuse to subscribe to the tenets of Johnsonian criticism, or to those of Burke's apostacy.

The Minstrel is an enchanting poem, but Dr Beattie's prose style is, like that of its acknowledged model, too relaxed and attenuated; a-

bounds too much in idioms, articles, and participles passive, and has too little harmony of period to please an ear accustomed to that undulating flow of eloquence attained by our best writers in the late and present century.

Curious that Dr Beattie should so often profess, both in poetry and prose, his utter contempt of metaphysic writing, and himself give to the world so many tracts in that class of composition.

Mr Nares regrets that he was not in Lichfield during the hours of its distinction from Dr Mansel's presence. Our Sunday-night's party never meet me without adverting to the social pleasures of that recorded evening. Little Tom White is returned home to be nursed; his young latinity barked away for the present by the hooping-cough!

Adieu, and believe me, with infinite esteem, &c. &c.

LETTER LVI.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, Sept. 23, 1806.

I HAVE the utmost gratitude for your last admirable letter. Ever welcome to me the effusions of the first imagination in Scotland, and of one of its kindest hearts. All you say of yourself is interesting as would be the egotisms of Shakespeare and Milton, were such precious things extant.

Your design of writing a Highland poem of probably equal length with the Lay, delights me. Every work of yours must be excellent, and none than that which you have in contemplation can be better calculated to the meridian of a genius so fertile, so romantic, and so elevated. In the Glenfinlas you have given testimony with what strength and grace your muse can traverse the Hebridian regions, assume the manners of their inhabitants, and paint their scenery. The materials you mention will, in your hands, form an ample poetic storehouse. You will have the advantage of new poetic ground, from describing Celtic manners in times so near our own, without any

of the disadvantages to which the lofty bard of Ossian exposed himself by attempted imposition.

Yes, I have heard of the venerable and humane Dr Blacklock, and read of him in Sir William Forbes's Life of Beattie. You add to his other merits that of having been your poetic preceptor; perhaps, in future years, far the proudest distinction of his fame, nay, his passport to immortal record.

And now permit me to thank you, in the warmest manner, for you ingenious and ingenuous dissertation in the letter before me concerning the long disputed claim of originality for Ossian. Dr Blair had so eloquently put forth a mass of internal evidence in its favour, that my faith long remained implicit. After-circumstances shook, but did not entirely subvert that faith. You have settled and unalterably bound up my opinion, that most part of those yet adored volumes, are the fruit of Macpherson's genius. Henceforth, therefore, I shall consider him as one of the greatest poets which the late century, so rich in great poets, has produced.

By the strong hand of truth, and by the deduction of natural consequences, you have removed the stoutest prop on which my desire for the antiquity of Ossian had leaned, viz. the immeasurable inferiority of his translation of Homer into

the oriental prose, in which he gave us the asserted translation of the Erse poetry. You shew me that this inferiority is, in a great degree, the difference between translated and original composition. The literal translations of parts of Ossian's poetry, which you possess, convict Macpherson of having been a sublime poet, and a very fallible moralist.

In my sixteenth year I first read Ossian. Infinite was the delight which it inspired. If I did not dance for joy, as Cowper says he did on first reading Homer, I wept for joy; yet I then found, as since I have uniformly found, that I could not proceed with it to a very long sitting. Our imagination, whatever be its poetic appetite, will not bear the protraction of unrelieved sublimity.

I take it to be that, much more than the apparent sameness of the landscapes and descriptions, which wearies our attention—"as the eye which has gazed for a short interval on eminences glittering with the sun, soon turns aching away to verdure and to flowers."

For myself, I confess not any diminution in the power of these volumes over my enchanted spirit, from my earliest perusal to the present hour, when I return to them after respited attention.—Born amidst the highest of the Peak mountains, and passing the first seven years of my life sur-

rounded by the wild grandeur of that scenery, it seized my first affections. Hence the landscapes of Ossian charm me more than those of more cultivated, more luxuriant countries.

Macpherson has placed in such varied points of view his mountains, heaths, and uncultured vallies, his lakes and ocean, his rocks and woods, his roes and dogs, his mists and suns, his stars and his storms, that the apparent sameness vanishes in a sedulous comparison of each with the others. It is thus that we find nature, even in her most barren creations, has variety exhaustless, which the poet's eye will perceive, and perceiving, be enabled to paint it vividly.

I have just now received the following memorial from a learned friend.

"Giraldus de Barry, in the year 1183, wrote the Itinerary of Bishop Baldwin through Wales. This is translated in 1806, by Sir Richard Hoare, Baronet. The incidents and heroes of Southey's immortal Madoç frequently occur. Amongst the former we read of

——"that hot and unexpected charge
On Aerioge's bank; and Berwyn's after-strife;"

and amongst the latter we find the names of Rhys, Cevilioc, and Old Goagan of Powys

Land. Giraldus also gives the interesting particulars of the disinterment of King Owen."

Politics having never been a theme of our letters, I know not whether you deplore with me the extinction of that bright luminary whose fifteen years earlier ascent in the zenith would have preserved, by its benign and pacific influence, the freedom of the continent, and averted from Britain all her present difficulties and dangers.

Ah! would to the muses that I had, face to face, opportunity of comparing your comical portrait of yourself with the original. Even from the grotesque sketch, I conclude that two faculties, not very often combined, are combined in you;—raised imagination and wit. That the former sublimates your writings I know; the latter doubtless gives you that overflowing gaiety of spirit of which you accuse yourself. The sportive sallies of such a mind are more worth than the wisdom of twenty philosophic Dons. Mrs Jackson, who is enchanted with you, tells me that there is much of Imogen's character in the manners of Mrs Scott. Adieu!

LETTER LVII.

MRS STOKES.

Lichfield, Nov. 10, 1806.

I AM much obliged by your kind attention to my domestic comforts. In my invalid state of health they must materially depend on the servant so constantly about my person. All expectation of finding one without faults is romantic, and you know my dislike to changing my attendants. She whom you saw with me remains still in her place. I then thought it was her wish to quit my service, and mentioned that idea to you. On examination she avows the contrary, and, as she has several good properties, since her integrity is indisputable, and I have no reason to think her remiss in the nursing cares, I believe it will be best for us both to rub on together.

Present me, I entreat, to the good Commodore, with grateful acknowledgment for the letter with which he has honoured me. I can discern in it, even through the dim medium of translation, all that is touching in sentiment; all that is elegant in expression. Assure him of my sympathy in

the sorrows of his captivity, and in Madame Querangal's inevitable sensations on the first sight of the liberated M. De Brosses in L'Orient. That interview must have awakened her regrets to double poignancy. The base alloy of envy mixes not with sensations so involuntary, so sacred to connubial love, pining through years of absence. I am gratified by the high praise with which this gentleman honours my excursive paraphrase of the French poem on the sorrows of absence. I have added many ideas, but congenial are the fruits thus grafted on the parent stock. If I could procure a frank, I would not be content with conveying, in the form of message, impressions left on my mind and heart; left by the animated letter of your Gallic friend; no, not even through the medium of your friendship.

So the subjected fate of the continent is, by the insane rashness of Prussia, finally sealed. The first rumour of a design so infatuated appeared to me perfectly incredible; surpassing, as it did, all records of attempted impossibilities; but when it was confirmed, I was certain of the result. It is not in unequal war to remedy the mischiefs of unjust and impolitic assailance, which, in the infancy of the French Revolution, laid the dire foundation of all these evils. Now is Poland avenged at full. Buonaparte will re-

establish the empire of that country; banish from it the usurpation of Austria, Prussia, and Russia; and so doing, drive back Alexander and his myrmidons to their native darkness and snow; shut them out from their commerce on the Euxine, and blast those designs upon Turkey which ambitious Catherine meditated, and left to her successors the legacy of her aspiring pride, and lust of boundless dominion. The conquest of France, if coalition could have obtained it, would have realized all the day-dreams of her sanguinary views. Resistless as Attila, like him, she had poured her northern hordes over Europe, and, even as the Gallic despot, been hated, envied, execrated.

I was persuaded to pass four days of last week in the ancient and hospitable mansion of my friends, Mr and Mrs Hussey, that, August was-three-years, so kindly shielded me and my sorrows. Its groves and gardens wore the many-coloured livery of the season. They were almost instep deep in fallen and yellow leaves; yet sunny gleams often gilded the thinned and perishing foliage, that yet clung to many and many a mossed tree "which has outlived the eagle." All was cheerfulness within doors. Our party large, our apartments spacious and lightsome, our welcome cordial. I said all was cheerfulness, forget-

ful how often in my bosom arose the pale light of memory, gleaming on departed years; on groups assembled in that mansion, amid which one fair spirit shone whose earthly light has now been long extinguished.

I rejoice in the promising nature of your filial prospects, as in the virtues of your sons. Their morning of life is sunny; may its noon and evening be cloudless!—Vain and improbable benediction!—the wish of friendship rather than the hope of experience. We may perhaps more rationally address to them that fine couplet in Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes:

> "Expect not life from pain and danger free,
> "Nor dream the doom of man revers'd for thee!"

LETTER LVIII.

Mr Seward of Birmingham.

Lichfield, Dec. 9, 1806.

Ah, yes, England has at last, toward the continent at least, completed the measure of her incendiary madness; ruined past all hope her allies,

and drawn ten times trebled danger and difficulties upon herself. If she does not soon purchase peace, even at that unavoidably-humiliating price as to its terms, to which her own infatuation has reduced her, those miseries must be speedily her own which she felt no remorse in bringing upon other nations, against the warning voice of her great deceased patriot, in this long and disastrous war; even the giant woes of seeing our country its bloody theatre. To bend at last beneath the omnipotence of events, and beneath the chastizement of heaven, must as certainly be national as it is individual wisdom. But what shall we do with our pride?—Sacrifice it as we did when we sought reconcilement with our invaded colonies, and be rewarded by long years of peace, and its blooming and blessed comforts.

It appears from your last letter, that several of our ancestors were painted by Sir Peter Lely. What pity that the fair and interesting portrait you describe, the work of that delicate pencil, should have been exposed, through want of care, to the cankering tooth of time and domiciliary dilapidation. My beauteous grandmother, the immediate parent of my father, is fortunately in very wonderful preservation, her date considered. My father, born in her 45th year, and in the year

1708, carries her youth into the latter part of Charles the Second's reign, the period at which Sir Peter drew that picture of our male ancestor, which is now at Wilton near Salisbury. My grandmother's picture looks about twenty-two. There is no marked want of harmony, either in the dress or colouring, between that pride of the seventeenth century and Romney's full-length portrait of me, drawn in 1786. When I shall have the pleasure to shew you the Lelyean Lady, you will think me vain perhaps, in mentioning the resemblance between these portraits which struck our celebrated Glover, and also several other less-masterly judges; but the utmost boast of my rising youth did not amount to a moiety of her charms. If any family-resemblance does really exist, as many think may be yet traced in my time-faded face, to this youthful beauty, the apparent grandmotherism seems now reversed between us.

How those hereditary traits, which constitute resemblance, are compounded from generation to generation! I am thought very like both my immediate parents, who bore no likeness of each other; and, on tracing back my penciled ancestors, you tell me my features and countenance are found in my great-grandfather at Wilton, by

Sir Peter Lely, and here they are thought to resemble the transcript of his daughter-in-law, by the same celebrated painter.

Through life I have only known one person, of whom in air, in features, and in countenance I could never meet a striking likeness. That graceful unique in the ever-varying expression of eye and of smile, I shall on earth behold no more; and from that hour of deprivation I have looked in vain in every stranger's face whom I met, for a similitude which half a century had failed to shew me. Adieu!

LETTER LIX.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ. of Edinburgh.

Lichfield, Jan. 29, 1807.

CAPTAIN HASTINGS, the deprived, the intelligent, and the excellent, sets out in a day or two for your city. It contains three little girls, to whom, in his prime of life, he is, alas! the only parent. Their mother was one of the best of women. In situations cruelly trying, she exerted fortitude superior to much for which heroes have

been celebrated. Captain Hastings' tender and unwearied attention to her, through the course of a long and evidently mortal illness, sustained by her with the sweetest patience and cheerfulness; his deep, and yet unsubdued anguish for her loss, render him highly estimable and interesting, while the lettered cultivation of naturally fine talents, enables him to reward every attention shewn him, and that by companionable powers of no every-day growth. My regard for this gentleman has no means of shewing itself so much to his advantage, as by my endeavouring to procure for him the honour and happiness of an introduction to you. He reads your poetry with enthusiasm warm as my own; and it has been a theme between us, over which our sentiments touched at all points.

> "And when he caught its measures wild*,
> The mourner rais'd his head, and smil'd;
> And lighted up his faded eye,
> E'en with a poet's ecstacy."

Now permit me to thank you for your charming letter of the 18th instant. From the fear of intruding too often upon hours so precious to the present, and so pledged to the future time, the de-

* Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel.—*S.*

light it inspired had not so soon flowed back to its source, but for this offered channel of free conveyance.

However I may regret the necessity you find of giving a sleeping draught to your Highland Poem, I feel the wisdom of your doing so, till the revivifying journey into those regions can be taken; that journey which shall give to the most kindling imagination in Scotland every possible advantage for the great work it meditates.

But here a melancholy consciousness arises, of the small chance I have of seeing it enrolled amongst the poetic treasures of the north, so deeply is my existence

"Fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf."

Concerning your later design I have better hope, oppressed as I am by all the decays of life, and by many of its sorrows, by obstinate and threatening malady.

I am also infinitely flattered by your purpose of sending for my inspection such parts of Flodden-Field as are sprung to light. How far I shall be able to discern the spots, if spots there are in a luminary of unquestionable brightness, may be doubtful; but I dare assert that I shall feel its excellencies with no common fervour. Envy is not

amongst my faults; and without vain assumption I may parody the boast of Anacreon,

> " Time has not chill'd my glowing heart,
> Or sense of beauty, with his icy hand!"

I mentioned to Captain Hastings the subject of your work now on the anvil. He seemed to think it tender ground for your patriotism; to question if it might not wound the known nationality of the Scotch, to see poetic celebrity and poetic immortality given, and that by a native, to the most disastrous event in their military annals.

Ballads have mournfully and sweetly sung it; but the flowers of the forest are different things to such an oak as you are planting. I persuade myself, however, that apprehension will be found groundless, as to the reception your poem may meet. The genius of Caledonia will come from your latest hand so graceful, dignified, and lovely, that his proudest sons shall not feel his laurels sullied by the interwoven cypress of Flodden's fatal field.

I think entirely with you concerning the foppery of the press; that eye-governed taste, which has spread from our theatres to our libraries. Those who feel poetry will always feel the engravings a disadvantage to it. What efforts of the

pencil ever equal in power, grace, beauty, and expression, those pictures which the true poet paints on the imagination of his intelligent readers?

The ambition of illustrating a fine poem by expensive engravings, is extremely detrimental to its lasting reputation; since of what class are the readers whose applause is capable of being the heralds of that of future ages? Not the wealthy, the fashionable, the titled, who exhibit in their boudoirs and drawing-rooms, new publications in the luxury of pictorial ornaments, but scholars and poets, seldom found in that triumvirate. To such, the gewgaws, or even the gems of the pencil, must ever be superfluous, incapable of increasing the charms of genuine poetry, or of adding one jot of enduring dignity to that which, unassisted by them, wants force and power to impress its images on the mind of its readers.

Upon any great work, more especially if it be of the poetic species, I do not hold the most endowed and liberal mind competent to decide after one, or indeed a second perusal. To the professional student, and the literary private gentleman, of moderate fortune, book-clubs may give that; but if the work be expensive, prudence, by restraining purchase, will not give more. To such, therefore, is precluded that intimacy of recurrence

which can alone be responsible for the full and perfect justice of appreciation, where the characters are various, the landscapes from nature, the sentiments touching, the reflections animated and new, and, in short, the whole composition extensive and admirable.

Mr White has lately told me, that you had published a voluminous edition of Dryden, abundant in critical notes, which detect and rectify former editorial errors.

My long estrangement from Reviews may account for my ignorance of the work; but how to account for the possibility of your having procured time for its execution, is my difficulty, amidst professional demands upon that time, the collection, arrangement, and critical and historical illustrations of the Border Minstrelsy, together with so many sweet original compositions, and considering the extent of your epic Lay.

I almost grieve that you, a great and celebrated poet, should employ your golden hours in removing the leaden incrustations of former editors. Abundant as are Dryden's beauties, his faults are so numerous, both as a poet and commentator, that I should think it sad up-hill work to defend him where he errs; and for his beauties, they have met their full portion of celebrity. He, Spencer, and Chaucer, have, in my opinion, been over-

praised. On a balance of their beauty and deformity, not one of them equals yourself or Southey. Coleridge has a very sublime and rich vein; naturally, and by education, perhaps not inferior to that of the author of Madoc; but Coleridge is indolent.

The vehement encomiasts of the three elder English bards, above mentioned, have been so numerous and high in reputation, that future ages will continue to echo applause, which, but as echo, perhaps, they would not give, at least in such hyperbolic excess.

Your sponsor in friendship, Mrs Jackson, pledges herself for your visiting me either on your progress to our capital, or return; but your own pen discourages that interesting expectation. I am afraid there is no balancing which is the best authority. Our little city is classic ground, by many more claims than that of having given birth to the greatest and most eloquent moralist this nation boasts, seated on the tribunal of its language;—by its being the nursery of David Garrick's youth,—and by the thirty-three years residence of the celebrated Darwin, together with that of several other distinguished, though perhaps less distinguished, inhabitants. That you mention me with Johnson, as having given lettered distinction to Lichfield, is infinitely gratifying to my self-

love. When I think of him, and of those others, who with him, shall, in future times, be mentioned to the honour of this town, Pope's beautiful lines rise in my memory, and express the fond ambition of my spirit :—

> " O, while along the stream of time their name
> Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,
> Say shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?"

Adieu! for it is more than time. I purposed to have sent you a tolerably short letter—and lo! a most intolerably long one! Which is to blame, your magnetism or my loquacity?

LETTER LX.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, April 17, 1807.

IT is only eight days since your valuable packet, dated February 20th, reached me through a private and unknown channel. To have left so much goodness so long unacknowledged, would

have been ingratitude indeed, unless utter imbecility, by sickness, had produced the delay.

The introductory stanzas to your new poem, Flodden-Field, have the first claim upon my grateful attention. Till after the close of your panegyric on our glorious Nelson, all is worthy of your enchanting muse, and is gathered to the much that evinces your injustice in fancying modern poetic talent in a state of dwarfism, from the days of Chaucer, Spencer, and Dryden; and in deeming them giants in comparison with their successors.

I bear glowing testimony to the giantism of Shakespeare, compared, not only to his dramatic successors, but to all his boasted predecessors of Greece and Rome. Other diminution, with my whole soul, I disavow. Unaccountable as it is, even the men of genius in Great Britain have, from the first dawn of poesy amongst us to this hour, been infected with the morbid idea of diminished strength and faded imagination in their own times; and by such thankless and unpatriotic avowals, they fed, and continue to feed, the envy of the prose folk.

With what a never-excelled wintry landscape your introduction to Flodden-Field opens! You place me in the scene, and the cold thrill of sym-

pathy runs through my veins as I read. Nature, Genius—you are alike inexhaustible; and as you were coëval from the first of days, coëval is your progress, and coëval will be your end.

To the fountains of nature, the mere versifiers have no access. Their book-made streams pall and sicken on the taste. They are the real dwarfs of the science, and they have alike encumbered every period, and every clime.

The connoisseur in painting knows originals from copies, by certain fresh and vivid touches; so also those who have been long versed in poetic reading, know originals from copies in poetry.

Now to your mountain bard, James Hogg,—luckless name!—I am too familiar with the ancient Scotch, to find any difficulty in understanding him. He is another poetic miracle, rising up from the lowest of your peasantry. Though I do not believe that he will ever reach the heights which Burns ascended, or ever produce a poem of such length, consequence, and interest as Bloomfield (inferior as he is to Burns) has given us; yet in some of the original unimitative compositions of James H., I perceive vivid and not infrequent flashes of real genius.

There is no lack of genius in these wild lays, but a grievous one of taste and judgment; and I

conclude, from the writer's avowed obstinacy of resistance to friendly criticism, that he will never acquire them.

Depend on my doing all the, alas! little in my power to recommend this extraordinary and worthy man to the public notice. Our book-club, to the disgrace of our city's old classic renown, has set its broad dull face against the admission of poetry; and Mr H. White shook his head hopelessly, when I desired he would endeavour to get the lays of the mountain bard ordered by its directors. They have not sent for any verse since the Lay of the Last Minstrel and Madoc, which they did vouchsafe to admit, on my sending them word, that it would be shameful if they did not order two poems of such first-rate beauty.

The men of genius, the literati, and the nobles of Scotland, energetically patronize the rising talents of their country; and, so doing, promote the interest of their possessors, and bring their fame to early maturity. As for England, it is not so with her. She has no nationality respecting poetic productions. Her colder, and, in that respect, less generous sons, believe the many who have, at all times, been ready to tell them that poetry is in a weak and dwindled state. They believed it in the days of Spencer, of Milton, of Dryden, of Collins, and of Otway.

Pope and Cowper alone saw the blushing honours of their fame flourishing around them. Enchanting writers as they were, it was not to their genius that they were indebted for that early celebrity. Party influence procured it for Pope, and religious enthusiasm for Cowper. The methodist class are calculated at fifty thousand.

From the writers of Spencer's period, I have gathered that it was the fashion to speak degradingly of his powers, in comparison with those of Chaucer; from those of Milton's time, and from the writers during seventy years after his death, I find that he was thought little compared to Spencer. Most of those who so pronounced, had doubtless never examined with attention the glorious works of the bard of Eden, which they thus profaned; but so it was, so it is, and so it will be said of future as well as present great writers.

I remember it the fashion to speak scornfully of the immortal odes of Gray; to echo for them Johnson's envious quotation—"bubble bubble, toil and trouble," as applied to them. I forgot another exception to the foregoing observations; Capel Loft has procured for Bloomfield, through his interest with the other reviewers, early and profitable celebrity, higher perhaps than even the Farmer's Boy can justly claim. The rest of its

author's compositions are little worth—they are as Cowper's verses in rhyme, compared to his Task and his Yardly-Oak. Adieu!

LETTER LXI.

Rev. H. F. Cary.

Lichfield, May 10, 1807.

More immediately should I have noticed the kind contents of your letter, had it arrived at a less interesting juncture. At two that day, Friday last, the poetically great Walter Scott came "like a sun-beam to my dwelling." I found him sturdily maintaining the necessity of limiting his inexpressibly welcome visit to the next day's noon. You will not wonder that I could spare no minutes from hours so precious and so few.

Ah! fortunate if one of your filial sojourns here had proved the means of introducing my poetic friends to each other. Such presentations are amongst my heart's luxuries. Respecting Lister, that possibility was within one day of having occurred; he called upon me on Thursday morning, and returned to Armytage after tea.

This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender; but lame in the same manner as Mr Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face, nor yet his features, are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eye-lashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing, or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper-lip, too long, prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and of heart play about it when he talks cheerfully, or smiles; and, in company, he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation, an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness, while, on serious themes, it is nervous and eloquent. The accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed, which his poetry must excite in all who feel the powers and the graces of Aonian inspiration.

Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr Scott; like Johnson also, his

recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice, either to his own writings, or that of others. You are almost the only poet I know, whose reading is entirely just to his muse.

Mr White and Mr Simpson breakfasted with us on Saturday morning. One hour only before that which he fixed for his departure, our northern luminary, by repeated and vehement solicitation, was persuaded to shine upon us till ten the next day. Mr Simpson would have no nay to his request, that the party should dine and sup with him and Mrs Simpson. The stranger guest, Scott, delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. He had diverged many miles from his intended track of return from our capital, to visit me ere he repassed the Tweed. Such visits are the most high-prized honours which my writings have procured for me.

I shewed Mr Scott the passage in your Dante which mentions his work, and the Magician it celebrates. He had heard of your translation, but not read it. On looking at a few of the passages, and comparing them with the original, he said there was power and skill in having breathed so much spirit into a translation so nearly literal; but he confessed his inability to find pleasure in that author, even in his own language, which Mr S. perfectly understands. The plan, he said, ap-

peared to him unhappy, as it was singular, and the personal malignity and strange mode of revenge, presumptuous and uninteresting. However, he promised to examine your English version more largely when he could find leisure.

Constable, Scott's Edinburgh publisher, dined with me a fortnight ago, and said he had agreed with Mr Scott to give a thousand guineas for Flodden-Field, a poem now on the anvil. The muses drive a thriving trade for Scott, as once they did for Hayley, and since for Darwin; but, alas! look at their bankrupts, from Spenser's day down to Chatterton, and in the present period. Mr Scott told me Gray and Mason* have been heard to declare the pecuniary barrenness of their deathless laurels. The honours of future times, inevitable indeed, but promissory only, are he sole rewards of Southey's energies, though awakened by all the nine. Adio.

* On mentioning this circumstance to Mr Scott he expressed his opinion that Miss Seward must have misunderstood him. Gray left his literary property to Mason, as is well known. It is not equally well-known that Mason considered the profits (and Mr Scott always understood that they were considerable) as a fund for the exercise of the noblest charity, in educating young men of talents, many of whom rose to considerable distinction.—*Note by the Editor.*

LETTER LXII.

DR HUSSEY, at Portsmouth.

Lichfield, July 28, 1807.

IN pain of body and feverish irritation, which banished night-rest, and in consequent languor of spirits through the days, I have seen a tedious month elapse since I received your letter. I saw your brother yesterday, and he told me you had not even yet sailed for the Cape, but were on board the Alfred, lying off Portsmouth, and, with General Weatheral and his family, were there waiting the appointment of a new convoy. In that situation I find you have passed several weeks.

I sincerely pity the long inactivity to which a spirit, energetic as yours, has been doomed; your books packed up, and inaccessible. Succeeding to a life of anxious cares, and exertion which knew not an hour's remission, this total, this spiritless contrast must be most oppressively felt.

If you had books, those precious silent friends, or the social intercourse of a few, or even one

kindred and breathing spirit, this privation of business might have proved a welcome recess; but acquaintance is not friendship. The commerce of an ingenious and ingenuous mind with one or more people of only common sense, cultivated but by a little knowledge of what is called the world, its uninteresting connections, and vain and idle ceremonies, is, if long continued, worse than even bookless solitude; worse than even that merely animal association of which Adam, previous to the creation of Eve, complains so reasonably to his Maker.

> "Among unequals what society
> Can sort? what harmony? what true delight?
> That must be mutual, in proportion due
> Given and received;—but in disparity,
> The one intense, the other still remiss,
> Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
> Tedious alike."

I know not what General Weatheral and his family may be; but generals and their suite commonly talk from a reservoir of ideas, and not from a spring; and few of such fine folk have reservoirs capable of containing ideas for several weeks consumption; peradventure not for as many days—nay, more than possibly, not for so

many hours! By experience I know the heavy labour of pumping up conversation from an exhausted receiver.

Whither can our frantic and impotent ministers be sending their continental expeditions? slaughter or imprisonment their certain fate. Our allies now see that British incendiarism, which has ended where it was always likely to end, in their destruction and vassalage, in its true light, and leave us on the brink of that precipice down which we have precipitated them.

When our wretched politicians are standing in blank and terrified astonishment,

"Spectators of the mischiefs they have made;"

while they are declaring, at last, the true and imminent danger of the country; are robbing every poor man of his liberty, by military coercion, fatal at once to freedom and to commerce; those who hold the reins of government are sending our soldiers by thousands and tens of thousands, out of these dominions, without one rational object, one probable hope;—their valour and their lives sacrificed in vain attempts to commit useless outrages upon triumphant and impregnable France; to destroy, with bombs and shells, a few French houses and their guiltless inhabitants;

or again to find ignoble graves amid the dikes of Holland, or to perish in impossible attempts in the dreadful climates of northern Europe; and this at a juncture when every British soldier will be wanted to defend his country from the long-provoked attacks of the invincible soldier, the unequalled general, who, by that stupid and mad assailance which we have stimulated, is risen to an extent of power unexampled as it is formidable, and from whose certain invasion reconcilement alone can save us.

O generation of madmen, who in hours like these, are vindicating our foolish ministers by crying out, "We must do something!" can no dire experience awaken you to a sense of the misery of obliging your country to become the seat of war? My very soul is sick of idiotism so big with universal danger, horror, and anguish.

And those who are so crying out, are echoing the *if* of the vanquished—"If England had sent twenty thousand men into Poland, Buonaparte had been defeated and the allies victorious."—Look at the fate of British armies in La Vendee! at Quiberon, in Holland, in Turkey! and be thankful that their blood did not swell the torrents that flowed in vain on the fields of Auerstadt and Friedland. Adieu, adieu.

LETTER LXIII.

MRS KING*.

Lichfield, Aug. 7, 1807.

I ENTREAT you, Madam, to accept my best thanks for the present of your religious tract, and for the permission of perusing in manuscript your ingenious and amusing tour. The first is a highly useful and able composition; the latter well merits the attention of the public in various respects.

But ere you send it to press, suffer me to adjure you to omit several passages tending still farther to inflame that hatred of the French monarch which has proved so fatal to the liberties of Europe, so dangerous to the long and blessed exemption of these dominions from the horrors attendant on being the seat of war. Insult and bullying will not avert their descent, or lessen them when they arrive.

* Author of a justly-approved work, entitled, "The Beneficial Effects of the Christian Temper on Domestic Happiness."—*S.*

O let no Christian spirit flatter the sanguinary vice of our government by calling it virtue. Let no such look back upon the unchristian system which produced our three last wars, without patriot contrition and Christian disapprovance!

You, who have so ably applied the warnings and admonitions of the New Testament to the domestic duties, can you fail to apply them to the duties of that great family, the state?

France was rash in her revolution, and criminal in its progress, but to God alone, not to any other nation, was she accountable for her conduct, for the choice of her form of government. Is there not a God to punish? It has been said that question extends to the exemption of every crime from human chastizement; but a code of criminal laws is necessary to the existence and preservation of every state, the strongest pillar of the social compact. Scripture nowhere forbids it to be erected. All who live under a nation's protection know the terms of that protection, and if they break the compact it has an indisputable right to cast them from its bosom. Against such exclusion they can plead no precept of the gospel. But with the bounds of its own government ceases its right to punish crimes.

No speculation concerning remote and possible contingencies can be a just excuse to God

or man for subjecting our own and other countries to authorized murder and mutual devastation.

Every ingenuous mind, which permits itself to reflect impartially, must feel the self-evident truth of that maxim. It simplifies the investigation at once, and leaves the moralist and the Christian no just power of modifying his political opinions; of following, with implicit trust, either kings or ministers through the blind, though subtle mazes of fancied or pretended expediency; since a far greater power than they has said, "Thou shalt not do evil that good may ensue."

When that prohibited evil is done, even its worldly consequences seldom fail to shew the miserable result of forsaking the path of moral rectitude, and of obedience to the revealed will of Heaven, in pursuit of imaginary advantages. In no case was the unhappy result of such dereliction more conspicuous than in the fate of this belligerent fury against France, and in the present situation of Europe.

Certainly none of us in private life are answerable for the crimes of our rulers; nor without presumptuous guilt, can we attempt to punish them; but it is as certain that, without sharing their crimes, we cannot vindicate any measures of theirs which stand in the direct level of gospel-denunciation, and of the humane suggestions of natural

religion. We cannot innocently flatter the conduct of living statesmen, or the memory of a dead one, who, in their pride, obstinacy, and hatred of a rival country, have set nation against nation, and kingdom against kindgom; and who, so doing, have spurned the dictates of benevolence, and the positive commands of Christ.

Is it the author of a tract so pious, and so wise, that we see lavishing the titles of great and illustrious statesman, on him who, during such a train of years, acted in direct opposition to the precept of the Saviour, who proclaims peace on earth and good will towards men? Beholding, as you do, the lamentable consequences of his rebellion to that precept, will you justify and applaud its violator? Looking back to the tissue of discomfiture which attended his plans, can you declare him great and wise? He who rendered his rare eloquence the sophistic engine to infatuate his country, and render her blind to his most unwise temerity!

Reflect upon his vaunting promise, so often made, of security and indemnification to Great Britain by continuing the war, though all its professed objects had previously vanished beneath his baffled attempts; still he vociferated that vain boast, and still the besotted country believed he would fulfil it. How he fulfilled it the present

state of the nation lamentably shews. Look at it, dear Madam, and surely you will not persist in proclaiming Mr Pitt wise.

Reflect also how long it was his cry, "Peace cannot be made with France in this her state of anarchy, and ever-changing rulers." Meantime Robespierre's reign of terror removed from other kingdoms all danger from the republican principle, proving its boasted liberty and equality an empty dream, a theory impossible to be realized. The disappointment would, in all human probability, have restored the Bourbons, as it has restored regal government, but for that stupid and unjustifiable assailance of foreign nations, which bound up the energies of the French people to strength and power almost superhuman.

Two unsuccessful campaigns had sickened Austria, Prussia, and Spain, of invading France, and attempting to coerce her plans of government. How unchristian, how cruel at that juncture, was the incendiarism of the British cabinet, swayed by him who is gone to his audit, answerable for the blood and anguish of millions.

Anarchy fell in the French nation, and a great warrior and great legislator seized the slackened reins of its government. Established as her permanent consul, that instability of sway, which our minister urged as the obstacle to peace, was no

more. The consul soon made himself an emperor, absolute and despotic; but let it not be forgotten, that, without the free consent of a great majority of the Gallic nation, he could not have re-established the fallen throne, or have ascended it himself.

Of small consequence to us, or to the rival powers of the continent, had been the despotism of Napoleon's reign, but for that dreadful resumption of the assailing plan after its short suspension; that resumption which threw the combined and conquered nations at the victor's feet. From the same sad fate peace, and peace only, can save this long happy country, whose security and blessings have been madly set on the desperate chance of utterly improbable attempts, and impiously sacrificed to national jealousy and the lust of war. O Madam, is there a greater crime than that Moloch lust?

England must dreadfully answer for that crime, if at last she will not expiate it, in some degree, by kissing the rod of Heaven's chastizement, by accepting terms of reconcilement, which, in consequence of her own wasteful and helpless fury, must necessarily be humiliating to her sinful pride. She has no alternative but that of speedy peace, or of becoming, like the nations she barbarously instigated, the seat of war, of desolation,

and of final subjection to that nation, and that man, whom she has defied, at the expence of ruin to her allies, and the most perilous hazard to her own independence.

Flatter not her insane temerity; and though she still, in effect, cry out, as through long years of useless havock, she cried out to her writers—Prophecy to us smooth things, prophecy to us lies; O may no serious Christian, no reflecting moralist obey the foolish, the ruinous injunction!

It is an awful crisis! England must fall if Ireland throw herself into the protection of France; a danger which, if Napoleon can effect a landing there, the late ministry's wise plan of Catholic toleration only could avert.

That fatal opposition to its salutary operation; that hypocritic cry, "The church is in danger," which, as a likely effect of Catholic emancipation in Ireland, no soul above the grossly ignorant and vulgar class ever for a single moment believed, must have alienated the great majority of the Irish people from the English government. Almighty God! was this a time, these hours of peril, thus to revolt, thus to provoke a sister nation? Could not the loss of America warn us against that similar folly?

What cannot the energetic and persisting spirit of the invincible soldier effect? Ten thousand

French on the Irish shores, Ireland is lost, and England undone.

It will then, by universal acknowledgment, be easy for him to pour his myriads on our coasts; and think what a commander in chief we have to oppose him! Let us remember Holland, and wisely fear! Our volunteers are brave, but what can their inexperience do against the veteran soldiers of France? They will die in defence of England, but, as they are without experience, without tactics, and under such an impotent commander in chief, they cannot save her.

Who, therefore, that wishes her exemption from the direst of all national evils, that of being the seat of war, will venture to say, still less to publish one word which has a tendency to widen animosity so big with destruction.

Your tour asserts, that the French in general hate their emperor, though he has raised their national glory to a height unknown since the reign of Charlemagne. Ah! remember how dear a similar persuasion concerning the republican principle cost the original invaders of France, and how fallacious it proved!

As to Buonaparte's usurpation, you cannot believe in the divine unalienable right of kings, since in a Briton that tenet is Jacobitism, stamps our own glorious Revolution with crime, and brands

our Third William for an usurper. Let us not have one law for ourselves and another for our enemies! Liberal policy spurns the grovelling partiality.

Conscious of the veering character which the French acquired at their Revolution, he takes strong and perhaps tyrannic measures to preserve his life and his throne. Yet should I think the danger to them imaginary, since that people know by experience, that the evils of despotism, however galling, are far less difficult to endure, far less injurious to human comfort, than the uncertainty, the rancour, the violence, and sanguinary struggles of anarchy:—Anarchy! which spares neither sex, age, or infancy, but points the sword, in turn, at every bosom.

> " In each strong government tho' terrors reign,
> Tho' tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,
> How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws or kings can cause, or cure!"

But all is misery, terror, and dismay in countries which are bloody theatres either of civil or foreign war. What are possible and remote dangers in comparison with that dreadful situation! England has now to choose between that or peace.

Excuse this long remonstrance.—I confess myself extremely alarmed,

——————" And mine are honest fears,
A patriot's for his country !"

I abjure her guilt, but I deprecate its retributory doom, and would fain see it averted.—There is but one way.

I have the honour to be, Madam, &c.

LETTER LXIV.

MRS BLORE of Edenzor, Derbyshire.

August 8, 1807.

Two most kind, most interesting letters from dear Mrs Blore, lie before me unacknowledged, the first of them bearing the long date of last April. My uneasy state of health, so very incompetent to my epistolary connections, will excuse me to a heart humane as yours.

With what generous enthusiasm does that first of your two letters paint your visit to my native Eyam !—dear in itself, and doubly dear in your description, in your animated delineation of its striking features; of scenery which bears the stamp of heroic and connubial virtue, when the

dreadful pestilence last visited this island. It is from this letter that I first learn that it was my beloved father who discovered the curious antique cross, and placed it in the churchyard of that village.

I had been much gratified by your son William's remembrance of me in Athens, and in the regions of the Grecian nine, but for the indignation I feel at his having allured you, by fallacious representation, to seek an home on the banks of Grassmere. Mrs Stokes, whose society I have recently, though transiently enjoyed, anticipated your account of the mortifying circumstance, the long expensive journey, the cruel disappointment. There is no guessing the motive of an account so flattering and unreal. The poorest English peasant cannot live without a fire place in his hut. I hope to Heaven Mr W. Gell forgot that there was not one in the chamberless cottage, to which he sent his mother. Mrs Stokes told me all the few apartments were in a ground-floor, and that every flood throws its waters into rooms which have no refuge from their torrent. Could your son be ignorant of that other insuperable bar to a constant residence in his house on the lake?

I am most glad that you have resumed our dear native county, and obtained a comfortable residence in the lovely village, whence you have

sight and access to Chatsworth Park and lawns, and where the warm hearth, and the smiles and conversation of a few social and intelligent neighbours, may temper the winter's severity, even when, on the snows of the opposite and vast mountains, the hybernal sun impotently plays.

And now, dear friend, I pass on to your recent letter. My sad heart feels all the kindness of your continuing to address me on each annual day, stamped with the dire event, to address me with remembrances so consecrating. It feels also with increased, instead of diminished pangs, the melancholy accumulation of the distancing years. Every one, as it passes, seems to push the dear image of our lost lamented friend into dimmer regions of the past.

During the first twelvemonth of my privation I found a mournful sweetness in being able to say to myself,—this day last year the friend of my soul illuminated this city, his own dear Lichfield, the walls and surrounding bowers of my habitation. Then came the dread anniversary to rob me of that precious consciousness; and the "this day two years," to which it reduced me, brought a doubling sense of privation. Time added a third year, and dismally widened the gulf between the present and the past—and now a fourth is come, and many are the inhabitants of a city

whose brightest ornament through a long period he was, many that never beheld, never listened to him. That is another painful consequence of the flight of time; and O! since it is not in the power of that universal overwhelmer to push him from my memory, the shadow of those vast wings, darkening the dear image yet more and more, increases the poignance of my regrets. How dreary, how chilling cold is this growing distance! how wide, how dark that gulf of absence is already become!

A new disorder has assailed my frame, its nature obscure, its source inaccessible. The exterior effects are local inflammation, and violent itching, hard enough to be borne in the daytime, but in the night, ere I have been in bed five minutes, the fiery darts begin to shoot with increased and scarcely-supportable fury. What the disease is, or how it will end, I know not; but from the time it commenced, Wednesday was a month, it has almost totally banished sleep from my bed. Thus when the night comes, though excessively tired and weary, I dread to press my pillow.

Yourself and Mr Longston of Eyam, so highly praising my verses to the young Roscius, are very gratifying to my muse. The discrimination of

that praise is extremely ingenious. It is worth while to write verses for such readers:—but ah! pray tell Mr Longston, that I foresee he will delay his purposed visit to Lichfield, till there shall be no one left there to whom he may speak the language of former time; with whom he may recal the years that are fled! Adieu!

LETTER LXV.

Robert Southey, Esq.

August 15, 1809.

Fervently do I thank you for a dearly welcome letter, and for the soon-following volumes. I am honoured by your condescending to consult me respecting some material alterations in the poem of my idolatry. Madoc appears to me a work too beautiful and great to stand in the smallest need of any alteration—yet the finale might receive added spirit and interest by your new plan for it. If this poem had not passed the press, I should have urged the execution of that design; but since it has over-stept the Rubicon, I fear that

a change so considerable may give triumph to the envious foes of its speedy celebrity, and, woe the while for human nature! they are an host. . .

Is there any dissention between you and Mr Coleridge, that many of his just admirers should, as they do, become the virulent aspersers of a poem far transcending all the beautiful productions of his muse? Will not these stupid, or these base conspirators against its rising glory, adduce to the public such alteration as a proof of its author's distrust of its excellence? They who in its present state fail to perceive, or perceiving, have not the justice to acknowledge Madoc to be amongst the first poetry the world has produced, will not be induced to renounce their heresy by any still farther degree of perfection which the creative hand of its author might possibly impart; while those who have sensibility to feel its excellence and grateful ingenuousness to proclaim it, will find its original stock of interest, beauty, and sublimity, all in all sufficient.

In every susceptible and generous bosom love and respect, heightened by compassion for his hapless destiny, must attach to Yuhidthiton, conquered and wandering into exile. He seems to me, in some sort, the Hector of this epic;—but I cannot think those sentiments towards him have any tendency to eclipse the image of Madoc in

the heart of the reader, standing there, as it does, surrounded by such a mingled blaze of the wise, the heroic, and humane virtues.

Successive editions of a great work may safely receive any merely verbal alterations which the author chooses to give them. I doubt the policy of such as respect the action or characters, even should they be improvements. My opinion asked, I hold it a duty of friendship to give it freely; yet to your mature consideration and superior judgment I submit my scruples.

I take pride as well as pleasure in having, on its earliest appearance, foretold, felt, and confidently asserted the future glory of Madoc as a poetic work; yes, with a degree of certainty, a glow of heart and imagination, increasing on every reperusal, that assures me I have not mistaken its destiny. Therefore is it that I shrink apprehensive, even when its author's hand approaches to touch so freely this ark of my covenant with unborn generations.

You surprise me by saying that Madoc had passed the age in which love is necessary for an hero. Does not Cadwallen ask him,

> "Are there no better purposes design'd
> For that young arm, that heart of noble hope,
> Son of our kings, of old Cassibilan,
> Great Caradoc, immortal Arthur's line?"

The epithet *young* fixes Madoc in the reader's mind some years under thirty; say twenty-seven—two years for the voyage and his residence in America, another year for his repassing the seas and his stay in Wales, a fourth for his return to America and final conquest of Aztlan, and he is then only thirty-one. Is it at that age, at life's high noon, that men lose the propensity to love and marriage? I thought it the season at which men feel and inspire ardent passion.—Yes, indeed, if the poem had not been published, I should have persisted in imploring you for a wife for Madoc. You might easily have made one for him out of a rib or two of Coatel's abundant virtues; as Deity is recorded to have formed Eve from actual flesh and blood out of the side of Adam.

Your testimony to the true merit of Addington as a statesman delights me. I have always felt and maintained it. Had he remained at the helm, without suffering himself to have been baited into resumption of the unequal and miserable contest with France and her victorious and able ruler, it had been happy for England.

Your Portuguese history will doubtless be an admirable work. May it prove a great and warning light to our ignorant and daring politicians; shewing them the wretched folly of impossible

attempts upon South America. Yet I speak what I wish rather than what I hope. Groundless hopes, lavished treasure, and lavished life, are the commodities in which they deal. National pride under any, the severest humiliation, will have enterprize, no matter at what price. This furor Pitt fed, madness pitch; and truth, reason, and eloquence combat it in vain.

Adieu!*

LETTER LXVI.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, Aug. 24, 1807.

MY temper is not suspicious, nor prone to busy itself with imaginary evils. Not therefore to friendship chilled by that personal intercourse

* The author's correspondence with Mr Southey commenced in the middle of the present summer, by a letter with which he then honoured her. She is still personally unknown to him. Having in former letters declared, with truth, and in proof of the impartiality of her encomiums on Madoc, that she was every way, except by his poetry, a stranger to Mr Southey, she is induced to add this note.—*S.*

which has increased its warmth on mine, did I impute your broken promise of an early letter on your return home, but solely to your expected press of electioneering business. Would to Heaven your silence had not been the consequence of more distressing circumstances!

I am gratified by your warm praise of my verses addressed to the young prodigy of the theatre. He performed here during a fortnight, and absolutely enchanted us all, at once by his inspired representation on the stage, and by the unsoiled simplicity of his manners in private company, for he was much caressed and invited. By the manager's contrivance of placing my indispensable arm-chair between the first and second scene, I was, without the intervening glare of the lamps, enabled to see and hear him in a nearness of situation highly favourable to the ever-varying expression of his lovely features and impassioned countenance. I saw him in five of his best characters.

Mr Mayne, a gentleman of genius and worth in this town, attached himself to the youth with all a brother's kindness; took long morning walks with him tête-à-tête. He assures me the boy's heart is all truth and unaffected sensibility; that his understanding is sound, and his imagination vivid.

With such excellent qualities of head and heart,

cultivated by an intimate knowledge of Shakespeare and our other best dramatic writers, I think his professional talents will have no great miss of what are called the classics. David Garrick, though born a gentleman, had not, I have understood, much knowledge out of the theatric pale.

People who possess the learned languages set a higher value upon them than perhaps they deserve. Recollecting how much time and labour they had spent in acquiring them, they are unwilling to believe them dispensable in any gentleman's education. The writers of Great Britain equal, in every style of composition, the proudest literary boasts of Greece and Rome, or those of any living language. I cannot suppose that the being able to read thoughts and sentiments, either of verse or prose, in foreign tongues, which in equal force and beauty may be found in our own, any great advantage to the understanding or imagination, or to be essential in the education of any young man not intended for divinity, physic, or law.

Old Betty talks of placing his miraculous boy with a schoolmaster of eminence at Shrewsbury during three years, so soon as the present summer closes. I foresee no great good in the plan,—entertain no hope that, should it be realized, a mind

stored with poetic ideas, and enchanted by their influence,—accustomed to universal attention, though unspoiled by the homage,—used also to reign over the hearts of his audience,—will be able to employ his thoughts on the conjugation of verbs, and the toil of translation, to gather husks of learning, when the seed-time and harvest-time of infancy has passed by. Kemble is a scholar and a fine actor, but his sister is a finer, and knows no language but her own.

I was delighted to observe that Henry Betty's wonderful and unremitted exertions have not injured his constitution. His beautiful complexion has the deep glow of health, and his eyes its clearest lustre. His appetite is keen as Gil Blas'; he grows fast, and is plump and stout, and his voice is recovering fast from its "mannish crack," as Shakespeare calls it. One of the players told me that it had greatly improved in the preceding six weeks. On its first break he should have been removed from the stage till it had acquired strength and fulness of tone. I believe it will be a very fine voice. The public have taken up the idea that it is spoiled, and perhaps the prejudice will be hard of removal. How often does excellence combat prejudice in vain!

If he lives and retains his health, tallness of figure will increase the power of that transcendent

grace of motion already his; and I have no doubt but he will be a great and universal actor. His Loony Mactwolter has every excellence of Garrick's Abel Drugger; the same simplicity of pure humour, nothing indebted to grimace and caricature. He set his audience in a roar of laughter, without one lurking, betraying smile on his own countenance,—precisely the dirty, ragged, lousy Irish tramper, with that mixture of odd, wild, yet grave wit and credulous folly, which mark the character of the Hibernian peasantry,—and his brogue was native and incessant.

This astonishing transformation of half an hour from the graceful and impassioned Essex, summoned to the block, and bending with agonized tenderness over his swooning wife, displayed to us all the versatility of his powers.

Surely Wordsworth must be mad as was ever the poet Lee. Those volumes of his, which you were so good to give me, have excited, by turns, my tenderness and warm admiration, my contemptuous astonishment and disgust. The two latter rose to their utmost height while I read about his dancing daffodils, ten thousand, as he says, in high dance in the breeze beside the river, whose waves dance with them, and the poet's heart, we are told, danced too. Then he proceeds to say, that in the hours of pensive or of

pained contemplation, these same capering flowers flash on his memory, and his heart, losing its cares, dances with them again.

Surely if his worst foe had chosen to caricature this egotistic manufacturer of metaphysic importance upon trivial themes, he could not have done it more effectually! Whenever Mr Wordsworth writes naturally he charms me, as in the Kitten and the Falling Leaves; Verses to the Spade of a Friend; Written on Brother's Water Bridge; The Sailor's Mother; three or four of the sonnets, and above all the Leech-Gatherer, which is a perfectly original and striking poem. If he had written nothing else, that composition might stamp him a poet of no common powers. The sonnet written on Westminster Bridge, is beautiful, unaffected, and grandly picturesque.

The ode, second volume, p. 147, is a mixture of his successful and unsuccessful attempts at sublimity. I delight in the five first stanzas;—then it goes rumbling down the dark profound of mysticism, whither my comprehension strives to follow him in vain. The lovely stanzas are a manifest imitation of an ode of Coleridge's, of very superior beauty, beginning, "Well, if the bard was weather-wise," &c.

An anonymous present of three volumes came to me lately: Letters from England, by Don

Manuel Espriella, translated from the Spanish. On many subjects they form a deeply-learned, and on all on which they treat, a very amusing work, abounding in the oddest possible sectarian anecdotes, and heretic history and information. Of our customs and manners, national virtues, prejudices, absurdities, and faults, it is a faithful picture; so faithful and comprehensive, as to make me doubt its being a translation. I think no foreigner either would or could take the trouble of tracing, with observation at once so extended and minute, the subtle maze of national characteristics.

These books appear to me likely to attract the attention of the higher class of readers, whom they are competent at once to interest and inform. They contain the best account I have seen of the Cumberland lakes. The author, whether foreigner or native, has drawn and discriminated their different features in the most distinct and vivid tints. He enables us to perceive the peculiar features of each picturesque mirror, its incumbent mountains and marginal woods; and conveys to his reader certain singularities of appearance, which no other tourist has noticed; which the eye of genius perhaps could only have remarked.

Two letters from the poetically-great Southey

have delighted me much. My avowed sense of Madoc's poetic excellence having reached his ear, it procured me the honour of its author's correspondence. He excites my concern and indignation by saying, that the profits on a year's sale of that glorious poem, amounted to L. 3 : 17 : 1; a deep disgrace to the national sensibility and judgment.

Critics, who are either incapable of feeling poetic beauty, and mistake sublimity for bombast, or fraudulently withhold the praise they know to be due, are alike the foes of individual genius, and of the national credit, when thus they labour to rob a first-rate poet of fortune and of early celebrity. What caterpillars in the bright roses of poetry, what wasps and hornets on the feet of Colossal literature, are such impotent, or such dishonest deciders!

If I live I shall hope to see you again my guest, and for a longer period than that of your first, and recent and dearly welcome visit, with all that kindness of heart and hilarity of spirit which are so much your own, and which act upon our feelings like a May-day sun. Adieu!

LETTER LXVII.

CAPTAIN HASTINGS* of the 82d Regiment, off Copenhagen.

Lichfield, Sept. 7, 1807.

DEAR Hastings, my heart is pierced with anguish by the tidings of your calamity. It is long since I have been so terribly shocked. My thoughts wander to your pillow many times every hour; indeed my spirits have, in no intervening instant, lost the gloom in which this event has wrapped them. The whole town mourns for you, even those to whom you are only known by the fair report of your seldom-equalled virtues, but none, except the General and Mrs Pigot, so deeply mourn as myself.

Good Heaven! that when only four of our officers suffered, you should be one! Yet you live

* He lost his left arm in the first action of that wild and most dishonourable expedition. Captain Hastings had been three years in Lichfield, aide-de-camp to General Pigot, and in that time lost his beloved and excellent wife. For a further account of this gentleman, see some of the preceding and following letters.—*S.*

—your wound, though dreadful, we are assured by your surgeons, will not prove mortal. That is our only consoling hope.

And surely you, who so well deserve the good will and kind offices of all who know you;—you, who were as a ministering angel by the couch of long-protracted suffering!—O! I hope you have humane friends who watch by you, to administer every possible assistance and comfort.

Alas! I often think—blessed is the departed, to have escaped the anxious misery which, by this event, she must have endured! Yet be cheered, my excellent friend! patient and collected I know you are, for where is there a firmer spirit? I pray to God to sustain and give you strength to recover from this cruel stroke, without irreparable loss of health, and then future danger to a life so valuable, in this dreadful, this interminable war, may, and I trust will be, precluded by the present misfortune.

Yes, the tender father will be spared to his children!—your rulers will not send you into action again! you will be permitted to return home so soon as you shall be well enough to bear the voyage!—You will be restored to your situation here. Government will surely recompense you as it recompensed young Captain Le Blanc, who lost his leg in battle seven years ago,

and was rewarded, as they term it, by a coloncloy. Alas! how inadequate to such misfortunes are rank and emolument!

But you will come back to us;—will live to embrace your children, to witness their growth, their improvement from year to year; and, when your wound is healed and your health re-established, your frame will soon accommodate itself to its deplored loss! On the testimony of my friend, Captain Arden, I know it will. Very many years past he lost his right arm in a naval action, which he had gallantly conducted. In a few months he learned to write his fair characters in equal fairness with his left hand—to carve for himself; to dress himself; and, as he wore a cork arm, his mutilation was often not perceived by strangers. He has told me that it soon ceased to produce heart-ache or depression of spirits in his own consciousnes.

Yes, dear Hastings, you will live to see many happy years, as happy as the loss of one dearer to you than life or limb will permit you to be. Time leads back peace to the hearts from which delight has for ever fled away. That I know on my own experience.

Miss Seward is infinitely concerned for you. There is not a man living of whom she thinks more highly. Major Burrows has been in Ire-

land some weeks. We expect he will soon return to us. The settlements are all arranged. He has acted most disinterestedly in that arrangement. He will be miserable in knowing you misfortune. Miss Seward has not written to him since we knew it. She is a miser of her epistles,—not one line that is not absolutely necessary, even to Major Burrows; yet she writes with accuracy and sufficient elegance. Major Burrows' attachment to you is extreme, and as for a dear brother will he grieve.

I hope and trust you may be able to bear the home voyage ere the cold sets in on those northern shores.—Adieu! revered friend; very dear had your virtues and your soul's affliction rendered you to me; and O! how much dearer are you by your present suffering;—but "Heaven will temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

LETTER LXVIII.

ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

Lichfield, Oct. 28, 1807.

YOU inquire if I have read Don Manuel Espriella's letters, said to be translated from the Spanish.—Yes, and with infinite amusement and interest. I suspect they are not what they seem: that no foreigner, however ingenious and industrious, could have collected such a body of information concerning our laws, customs, manners, prejudices, sectaries, and superstitions; and all noticed with such accuracy, and commented upon with so much spirit and good sense. Whether these letters have been written by some highly-ingenious English Roman Catholic, or the principles of that religion have been assumed to excuse the keen lashing given to Protestant absurdities, I pretend not to decide. The purity and ease of the language bears another testimony against the foreign claim of the work; it has the raciness of originality, not the lees of translation.

In one of the assertions of this work, as to

the superiority of Lady M. W. Montague's letters to all other published letters in our language, I am indeed surprised. From the time of my juvenile years, in which I read, and on account of their celebrity, re-read her two first volumes, to that of my maturer contemplation of those published in later days, I have been invariably impressed by what appears to me an utter dearth of sensibility, and a considerable dearth of the charms of fancy. We find shrewd sense, some wit, with caustic spleen, and jealousy of contemporary genius; no affection, and little felicity of description, except where voluptuous scenes and objects are described.

Gray's letters have more wit, and a thousand times more imagination. In his style there is coy elegance and luminous beauty; in hers perspicuity, but no lustre. Walpole's, though they have not much more of elevated imagination than Lady Mary's, have a thousand times more wit, and play of ideas; and they also evince that energetic attachment to his friends, which in hers we seek for in vain.

Though all of Pope's are not excellent, some of them are as superior to the best of hers, as is his glowing poetry to her smart verses. Several also of Cowper's transcend her Ladyship's, much as Cowper's have been over-praised.

When the ostensible foreigner is made to pronounce Dryden and Pope the best English poets, the real author was writing for him, and not through him. No native, capable of writing these admirable letters, could so have pronounced from his own judgment. On the contrary, no foreigner ever did, or perhaps ever can attain that perfect knowledge of our language which might enable him to comprehend the dignity and beauty of our noblest blank-verse; consequently they will never perceive the superiority of Shakespeare, Milton, and Southey, to any writer that ever gemm'd the runic fetters with ideas even the most intrinsically poetic.

Alas! the fate of our armies in South America has anticipated that reasoning of yours on the subject, which I dare assure myself is all demonstrative truth; and O! the dreadful business at Copenhagen!—eternal stain on British faith, justice, honour, and humanity! The majority of the nation, obsequious to the powers that be, will

——————" With necessity,
The tyrant's plea, excuse the devil as dog,

and when in the end it has produced real mischief to this country, instead of fancied advantage, the

general and almost inevitable fate of all evil actions, they will continue to do, what they have done through the whole course of this disastrous war, lay the consequences of ministerial guilt and folly upon the over-ruling power of Providence, and bring forth some obscure texts in the Revelations about calves and candlesticks, as shadowing forth the fate of France and England. O! it is ill for states, as for individuals, when they choose to incur certain and atrocious guilt, rather than distant and contingent danger.

The Reverend Henry White of Lichfield is a collector of ancient books and tracts. His friend, George Parker, Esq. of Cheshire, lately sent him Wharton's Almanack, published in 1662, the third year after Charles the Second's restoration.

This curious old chronicle contains a list of the Welch kings, from the departure of the Romans to the period in which Wales ceased to be a monarchy. They are forty-one in number, beginning with Constantine, of little Britain, or Armorica, and from him nominally travelling down, with the dates of each beginning reign, to

"1078, Gruffyth ap Conan. He (says this chronologer) reformed the Welch poets and minstrels, and brought others out of Ireland to instruct the Welch.

1137. Owen Gwineth ap Gruffyth ap Conan.

1159. David ap Owen Gwineth. In his time, (saith this record,) Madoc, his brother, discovered part of the West Indies.
1194. Llwelin ap Jerwerth ap Owen Gwineth.
1240. David ap Llwelin ap Jerwerth.
1246. Llwelin ap Gruffyth ap Llwelin ap Jerwerth, the last prince of Wales of the British blood."

This venerable and veritable tract does not, you see, give its information, which stamps your poem with reality of basis, as a tradition, but as a known fact; and we also learn from it, that Llwelin, the brave young hero of your epic song, obtained, at length, the throne which his uncle had usurped; a fact which your readers must be solicitous to know.

Strange that an event of so much national interest as the first discovery of the western world by a native, after having been known in Great Britain through so many centuries, should have receded from general consciousness. The reason must be, that the circumstance, however interesting, did not produce here any important political consequences, of which it became so pregnant in Spain and Portugal. After all, it was unpatriotic in her sons not to preserve for their country the universal memory of a circumstance which transfers the glory of that great adventure from

the Genoese to the Briton. Recompensing is it now to find an event, thus unaccountably obscured by time, recovered and ascertained; to see it form the basis of the noblest epic work since Milton.

> ——————" For the beams of truth
> More grateful touch the understanding's eye,
> Than all the blandishment of sound his ear,
> Than all of taste his tongue."

I was pleased to find Espriella's letters explaining the individuality of each criticism in the reviews; that in all the various departments of literature, history, or physic, divinity, politics, law, or philosophy, we have only one man's opinion of another man's work. More than once, in print, I have stript the veil of plurality from the single solitary Wight, who, in every one of these periodical olios, possesses his separate and unpartaken department; but the public still remains haunted by the vision of a co-adjunctive council-board. Adieu!

LETTER LXIX.

MRS STOKES.

Lichfield, Oct. 25, 1807.

ALAS yes, it was my friend whom you saw on the list of the wounded.—Hastings is wounded irreparably, though not mortally; mutilated in the prime of youthful manhood, for he is not yet thirty-three; the firmest, and yet the gentlest spirit that ever animated a pleasing and graceful form. You were charmed by the intelligence of his countenance, the unaffected grace of his manners, and the music of his voice in speaking, during the transient period in which you conversed with him here.

You ask me now of his story, and I shall give it you briefly as I may.—Captain Hastings, of the 82d regiment of foot, is a distant branch of Lord Moira's family; his only inheritance a gentleman's education and his sword. When scarcely more than twenty-one he married a young Scotch lady, of gentle birth, but without fortune. Her sweetness of temper, energy of conduct, and the cheerful fortitude with which she sustained a li-

gering and painful disease, which she knew to be mortal, rendered her eminently worthy of that gallant and noble heart which she so devotedly possessed.

It is three years and a half since Mrs Hastings came to Lichfield with her husband, in a deep and hopeless decline. He attended General Pigot as his aide-de-camp, who is here for the district. Their three infant girls were left at school near Edinburgh. To their mother's hapless situation the General remitted Captain Hastings's official duties. Through a whole year he watched, a ministrant angel, by the couch of the sweet sufferer, not leaving her for a single hour, till, from all its painful struggles, the beatified spirit soared away.

Before time brings its healing aid, no consideration can assuage the anguish of everlasting separation from a being exquisitely dear. Poor Hastings's sorrows bore witness to that truth; yet he paid the last duties, following the mournful procession with a step of assumed firmness, though it trembled amid the struggle, and with a pale face of tearless agony. When, bending over the dropt coffin, his eyes looked their last, the tears, that would no longer be restrained, fell in floods on the plates.

Lost to every surrounding object, (and many

people were present,) it at length became necessary to urge his departure. At the voice of admonition he started wildly, and rushed back to his near lodgings. On entering them he fainted away, and, on recovering, shut himself up in his apartment, nor would see, during three days, his most intimate friends, but received his food through the half-opened door.

The instant he could be prevailed upon to quit the scene of his long-enduring woes, General Pigot allotted to him an apartment in his house, and he received from him and from his lady every kind and soothing attention. A four-months leave of absence was soon granted, to pass them in Scotland with his children. He returned in amended health and spirits. The still voice of conscience was doubtless as oil upon the waves of anguish.

Widely different in age, yet a similarity in our literary taste has united with my sympathy in his sorrows, and formed a friendship between Captain Hastings and myself, which I dare believe will extend to the last hour of my life's poor remnant.

Immediately on his return from Scotland, he, out of his slender income, erected a monument in our cathedral to his beloved Agnes. Its simple elegance attracts every eye; its modest

praise of her so justly dear, affects every feeling heart.

On the 26th of July last he sat in my dressing-room, expressing thankfulness for his situation with General Pigot, which, by its exemption from all self-expence, enabled him to defray that of his children's education. If, continued he, the tears gushing from his eyes, I drop, they are indeed orphaned. Ah! how shocked was I, the next morning, when he called to say, that he had received orders to join his regiment on the instant, drafted off for the dreadful expedition to Denmark.

An eight-days sail carried my brave, unfortunate friend to the devoted shore. On the morning after our troops had landed in Zealand, the house of a respectable Danish family became exposed to the adverse fires of the contending parties. It consisted of a man and his wife, three children, and the aged grandfather.

The husband implored Captain Hastings, who had expressed humane compassion for them, to use his interest to procure their passport from that scene of peril. It was two days before it could be obtained. Hastings then flew to the sufferers, informing them that he had not only obtained the desired grant, but also that of a re-

gimental cart to convey them from that perilous situation.

Ah, Sir! exclaimed the unhappy man, weeping, your goodness comes too late. We have not tasted food these two days; my wife, my father, my infants are perishing. Too weak to travel, we must stay and die. Captain Hastings instantly took the wallet from his shoulder, which contained that day's provision, and placed it before the famished man; he also begged from his brother-officers a portion of theirs, sufficient to recruit the fainting strength of the whole group, who, delivered from impending death, doubtless went on their way blessing their kind and generous preserver.

The next morning Sir David Baird came up to Hastings—"You have led your company into a too exposed situation, take them instantly into one of less peril." The moment he had uttered these words a twenty-four pound cannon-ball tore off Captain Hastings's left arm, and dashed to pieces the head of his friend and lieutenant, whose brains, mixing with my dear friend's blood, filled the collar of his coat.

Hastings did not fall, but, with his arm hanging near his feet, walked a quarter of a mile through a heavy cannonade. Then, having pas-

sed the line of battle, he sat on a stone, and suffered immediate amputation.

He lay forty-eight hours on wheaten-straw in a hovel. The ears of the straw, insinuating themselves through the bloody collar, added their torments in these painful hours. At length he was removed to the commissary's house, who resigned his bed to him, and watched him, and comforted him with a brother's kindness.

The regularity of the sufferer's past life, the sweetness of his temper, and his cheerful patience, made recovery rapid. He had no fever, though much annoyed by strange nervous sensations, which represented the lost arm and hand as still attached to his body, with perpetual convulsive openings and closings of the imaginary fingers, which often seem to dart their nails into the clenched palm. He has not, to this instant, lost the incessant recurrence of these cruel sensations, which must be as though the phantom of a dear departed friend were ever in one's sight, mute, companionless, ghastly.

On his home-voyage he was dreadfully afflicted by the consequences of tempestuous weather, which continually beat the unhealed stump against the sides of the cot in which he lay.

On the 29th of last month he walked into my dressing-room, pale and emaciated, but smil-

ing cheerfully, and stretching towards me his only hand. Never were joy and grief so mingled in my soul; they shook my whole frame and deluged my eyes.

"I am well," said he, "my kind friend; I am happy, my appetite is good: in the daytime I combat my involuntary phantasies by diverting my attention from them—when they shall cease to break my rest, my health will become firm.—My children have yet a father!"

Dependence on his re-established health is not so lively with me. I fear he is deeply shaken. —Something of ghastliness lurks beneath his smiles.

Surely government will make some recompense to this excellent young man, blighted in his prime in their cause. Recompense!—alas, nor professional rank, nor all the gold in the treasury can do that; but a portion of it for his dear childrens sake would be welcome. Adieu!

LETTER LXX.

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

Lichfield, Nov. 5, 1807.

YOU observe that Southey has not been attentive to his interest—I conclude you mean, by not having sold his copy-right. If he had done so, the loss on its torpid circulation had probably been the purchasing bookseller's. Still the reviews are the sources of the mischief. Justly does he observe, that though malice and envy, through the breath of a reviewer, have not ultimately the power to blast one laurel-leaf, yet may they mildew a whole field of corn.

Perhaps he did offer his copy-right to sale. Alas! for the depraved spirit of the times, in which pacific principles are deemed guilt, when nearly all the reviews are so unjustly partial to the powers that be, as to pronounce upon the work before them, not according to its merits but the party of its author! What bookseller would venture to give a fair price for an eminent composition, known to have proceeded from a declared and uniform foe to the operative politics

of the last fifteen years? The less would he venture to do it, from being aware, as every person must be, that those ruinous politics have been more and more rooted in the hearts of the people of England in general, by every one of those resulting mischiefs, which we might naturally expect would have torn them up, and scattered them, like chaff before the rising storm.

Only a few extracts from the silly-titled poem, Epics of the Ton, have met my eye in one of the reviews, which I accidentally took up. I thought them that species of satire which shews its teeth without being able to bite; but the public will, through its odious lust of personal defamation, fancy it bites, and that is enough to give the trash general reading and present eclat. I have no desire to chew any more of its thistles. Satire must be thoroughly deserved, and its author fairly acknowledged, to afford me any species of pleasure in the perusal. The screened assassin, either of talents or of moral character, is hateful to me as the felonious murderer. As I wish the latter to be swept from the earth by public justice, so do I wish the former may perish instantly on the records of literature by a total famine of readers.

Dear Hastings, of whom I wrote to you last January, recommending him to your notice on his

residence at Edinburgh, which recommendation your absence at that period rendered fruitless, has lost an arm in the disgraceful invasion of Denmark. No supposed peril to this country can excuse, or even extenuate its perfidy. It is with states as with individuals; better perish than live by cruel and dishonest measures. That principle once abandoned, there is no end of the dereliction; we forfeit all claim to the protection of God, and ruin meets us in the mazes of guilt.

I am told that the man who reviewed Madoc in the Critical Review for January 1806, is a noted mildewer on the profits of the noblest verse; a gentleman who has laughed himself out of all sensibility and respect for character or composition, whatever excellence may attach to it. In the same spirit he has reviewed Wordsworth's two last volumes. Many of their contents lie fairly open to the reprehensive disdain of even a just critic; but beautiful emanations of true genius adorn several of the compositions, and make them genuine poetry. Not one of these are thrown into the contrary scale; but all is splenetic invective. And thus the public, imposed upon by the plural *we*, persist in being haunted by the phantom of a literary council-board, where, in reality, sits one solitary coxcomb, deciding upon claims he knows not to appreciate.

Why will not the mass of readers understand this? To understand it would lessen the potency of review-mischief, and greatly serve the cause of literature.

On Monday last my young cousin, Miss Seward, whom you saw at my house, was very advantageously married to Major Burrowes, late of the 38th regiment of foot, the heir to a large estate, and in himself all that a reasonable young woman can desire in a husband; esteemed and beloved by all who know him.

Dear, and admired friend, adieu!

THE END.

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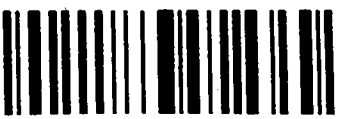
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